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ENGLISH

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ESSAYS PRESENTED TO PROFESSOR SRICHANDRA SEN

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UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

# BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Professor Srichandra Sen, who taught English for well over a quarter of a century at the University of Calcutta, was born in 1905, in a family distinguished for its contribution to literature and scholarship. His father was an eminent man of letters and the first Professor of Bengali at the University, two elder brothers were historians, while a nephew is one of the foremost Bengali poets. Sen joined the English Department shortly after completing his work on the twentieth-century English novel, becoming later Reader in English and, for some time, Head of the Department. A travelling fellowship had enabled him during the forties to work at Cambridge on the ideological background of Daniel Defoe. The monograph, which was subsequently published, has been mentioned by E. M. W. Tillyard as his principal source for a chapter in *The English Epic and its Background*. Sen's later writings, mostly on twentieth-century poetry, appeared in the *Bulletin of the Department of English* which he founded and also edited until his appointment to the chair of English at Visva-Bharati University in 1965.

The Board of Editors of this Journal have decided to offer this special number in acknowledgement of the debts they owe to a beloved teacher whose life has been marked by a single-minded devotion to scholarship, and whose lectures have inspired generations of students with an abiding enthusiasm for English literature.





# “A POEM SHOULD . . . BE” : MIMETIC AND DIDACTIC MODES OF POETRY

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ARMIN PAUL FRANK

## I

TIME was when it was felt that the age of poetry was degenerating into a parasitic age of criticism. Today, by all appearances, we are well into the age of meta-criticism, and the next epicycle is already spinning : the criticism of meta-criticism. But poetry, like Münchhausen, has a way of extracting itself from the quicksand by its own hair.<sup>1</sup> For since its medium, language, is also the instrument of reflection and communication, reflections about the art of poetry may become part of poetry ; in fact criticism and the theory of poetry are at times themselves metamorphosed into poetry.

This sleight of hand comes off to advantage in Ted Hughes' poem "The Thought-Fox." Hughes, who likes to compare the writing of poetry with hunting and fishing and who, in *Poetry in the Making*, describes a poem as a "new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own," has given "The Thought-Fox" a prominent position in his work : He has taken it out of the original company it kept in *The Hawk in the Rain* and has moved it to first place in his *Selected Poem, 1957—1967*.<sup>2</sup>

### The Thought-Fox

I imagine this midnight moment's forest :  
Something else is alive  
Beside the clock's loneliness  
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star :  
Something more near  
Though deeper within darkness  
Is entering the loneliness :

Cold, delicately as the dark snow  
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf ;  
Two eyes serve a movement, that now  
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow  
 Between trees, and warily a lame  
 Shadow lags by stump and in hollow  
 Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,  
 A widening deepening greenness,  
 Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
 Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
 It enters the dark hole of the head.  
 The window is starless still ; the clock ticks,  
 The page is printed.

It is night, and the speaker of this poem is sitting before an empty sheet of paper. His thoughts wander to the dark forest outside as he imagines it to be at this very minute, to "this midnight moment's forest." The demonstrative pronoun "this" here and in line four creates an impression of immediacy which is reinforced by the use of the present tense throughout the entire poem. The reader is thus fictitiously drawn into the very moment of creation which in this poem constitutes both form and meaning. The fictitious nature of the reader's implication is underlined by the fact that the whole poem is strategically placed under the augury of the imagination ("I imagine..."): He vicariously observes something approach which is nearer yet darker than the starless night outside—though he may be reading this poem in brilliant sunlight on a park bench or under the bright neon lights of a classroom or in a thousand different situations. Whatever it is that approaches begins to assume gestures of foxiness in stanza three: a sniffing nose, two wary eyes, a shadow lagging behind a purposefully moving body. The figure as a whole, however, remains indistinct, without contour, recognizable only through characteristic detail—the most characteristic and clearly recognizable being the footprints left behind in the snow. Again, it is with extreme emphasis on the present moment that the footprints are referred to—and in the precise middle of the poem:

...that now  
 And again now, and now, and now  
 Sets neat prints into the snow...

The strange creature finally comes so close that a single one of its eyes suffices to fill out the entire field of vision of the observer, an eye which now begins to illuminate the night in its own, perhaps somewhat spectre-

like fashion : It turns into a comprehensive, green brilliance. Having been summoned by the imagination, no one can stop it as it is "coming about its own business" in a single, determined sweep—just as the syntax of the poem breaks loose in stanza three at the very moment that the strange presence makes itself felt in its first manifestations, cuts across line and stanza ending, and moves towards its aim in an unbroken movement, a movement which no longer follows the rules of conventional syntax and may therefore also be said to be without contours, syntactically speaking : The objective of both movements, the syntactic and the imagined one, is to achieve a single explosive moment of recognition :

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
It enters the dark hole of the head.

And this brings the reader to the last stanza. Nothing has changed in that nocturnal room, yet everything has changed : Due to the double meaning of the word "print," what was formerly a "blank page" has now been filled, clearly and distinctly, with the "neat prints" of the visiting night creature : "The page is printed." The last line confirms that a poem has come into existence, brilliantly, out of the uncharted darkness of imaginative language, and has imprinted itself upon the reader's consciousness.

Two points deserve to be emphasized : In the first place, the poem and its present reading may give rise to the impression that it is nothing but a versified variant of late expressionistic ideas about how a poem is made—or a makes itself. For it is easily remembered that T. S. Eliot, following Gottfried Benn, has described the making of a (lyrical) poem as the articulation of a "mute, creative germ" : There is, first, an impulse, unidentified and uncontrollable, which coerces the poet to write—and the words of the arising poem serve to give this impulse a face and a name. Only when the poem has been completed can the poet see what it is.<sup>3</sup>

There is, however, a second point, and one of supreme importance in defining the ontological status of a poetological poem as here envisaged : What distinguishes a poem such as "The Thought-Fox" from corresponding theoretical statements is the simple yet all-important fact that whatever knowledge of the creative process may be contained in the poem has been transposed into immediate experience ; metaphorically speaking : Insight has been made visible. This is not to say that the thought-fox itself is an allegorical figure that *exists for the* sole purpose of getting translated or re-translated into a theoretical statement. Most emphatically not : The fox does not "stand for" "the poem" or "the idea for a poem"—it is a fox, and remains one throughout—a fox, it is true, with a rather unusual habitat. And the poem which he inhabits is a poem in the full modern sense of the word.<sup>4</sup>

The features of "The Thought-Fox" which have been emphasized here—not the least of which is the sleight-of-hand which brings the poem to a close at the very moment and with the very same words which complete the depiction of the creative process—combine to contribute to the decisive distinction of the poetological poem: It replaces—or may be displaces—a theoretical statement with an event in language.

This linguistic act is not constituted by referential meaning alone, as are everyday communicative utterances in which syntax is a mere vehicle; rather syntax, sound, line and stanza structure, down to the most minute detail, combine with the lexicon to form an event in language which employs all of its resources to constitute an experience. Thus, in stanza three, line two, the rhythm of the line is just as hesitant as the fox's nose is described to be, the nose which "touches twig, leaf"; or, when it is said that the thought-fox, in approaching, is "bold to come/Across clearings," the phrase, too, *as phrase*, crosses the break between stanzas four and five.

Considering evidence such as this, would it not be appropriate to call the "Thought-Fox" a *mimetic* poem? For its main objective is not to formulate and communicate an idea, a situation, an occurrence, but to imitate in language whatever it says, to give, as it were, full linguistic body to its imagined content.<sup>5</sup> To be poetological a poem must contain some insight into the nature of poetry; to be a poem in the modern sense of the word, it must replace this insight with an event in language. This definition, if firmly kept in mind, will, hopefully, block off a misunderstanding which is apparently shared even by many of those who have come to realize that poems on poetry constitute a large and variegated field of modern poetry: the misunderstanding that poems on poetry are nothing but versified criticism, hence a subtype of didactic poetry, and therefore, strictly speaking, no poetry at all.

This is, more or less, the verdict of René Wellek, the American dean of literary theory and history of criticism. In his characteristic manner of condensation and apodictic evaluation based on a wide range of material, he dismisses the classical verse poetics as "incursions of criticism into poetry." In the same essay, "The Poet, the Critic, the Poet-Critic" (1970), he uses the term 'meta-poetry' to characterize the short poetological poem since Verlaine's "L' Art poétique," which he calls an "antirhetorical pamphlet."<sup>6</sup>

## II

But even such desultory references to the poetological poem are scarce. Not even a 1965 anthology, *Poems on Poetry*, edited by Robert Wallace

and J. G. Taaffe, seems to have stimulated much interest.<sup>7</sup> A comprehensive and balanced survey of the field has therefore yet to be undertaken. A small step forward was Alfred Weber's lecture and essay, "Kann die Harfe durch ihre Propeller schießen? : Poetologische Lyrik in Amerika" (1969; the title, "Can the harp shoot through its propellers?," is borrowed from a poem by Kenneth Patchen).<sup>8</sup> But Weber's paper, being a first exploratory outing into what seems to be quite an extensive unexplored area, is lacking both in precision and conspectus; there is still need and occasion for some basic distinctions.

Hughes' 'the Thought-Fox' is an almost perfect example of the *mimetic* type of poetological poem; Wellek's remarks offer an occasion to consider the *didactic* genre of verse poetics.

The classical line of verse poetics is sufficiently determined by the representative names of Horace (*Epistola ad Pisones*, ca. 15 B. C., since Quintilian known as *Ars poetica*), Vida (*De Arte poetica*, 1572) Boileau (*L'Art poétique* 1674) and Pope (*Essay on Criticism*, 1709/11)—though this brief list does not by far reflect the popularity of this genre in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. If one is inclined to regard the polemical elements of judicial criticism and personal invective occurring in such works not merely as accidentals but as constitutive parts of the verse poetics (whose classical examples, to be sure, are primarily prescriptive), this line extends through Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) and J. R. Lowell's *Fable for Critics* (1848) well into the 20th century to include Amy Lowell's *A Critical Fable* (1922) and Karl Shapiro's descriptive verse essay on verse, *Essay on Rime* (1945).

Among the factors which make the verse poetics an almost continuously practised genre, two seem especially important:

(1) In those times (and this was rarely enough) when poetry-writing was considered a worth-while and desirable activity, either generally or at least by those who count in such matters, there was quite an interest in learning about the mysteries of the craft, even in verse. This interest may occasionally have been so great that verse poetics made the most rigorous demands precisely when it seemed necessary to dissuade tenacious though untalented ephebes from taking up the trade.<sup>9</sup>

(2) On the other hand, whenever poetry (or at least one or the other of its types) was disregarded or even actively attacked, there was reason to explain or defend it, even in verse. Such attempts at vindication frequently included counter-attacks on Philistines, on critics whose judgments were felt to be unjustified, and on fellow poets who were thought to be unjustly preferred by readers and critics.

In contradistinction to poetological poems verse poetics are

sufficiently characterized by five or six of the following seven criteria :

- (1) They propose clearly and distinctly stated basic definitions of poetry, its genres, traits, and uses, and enumerate principles and general rules.
- (2) They offer special instruction and advice to the prospective author or critic ; they suggest or even prescribe what he is expected to do in special situations.
- (3) They pass judgment on poets and critics, ancient and modern ; especially when they condemn, they sparkle with rhetorical brilliance and bristle with mordant satire.
- (4) They provide illustrations for precepts, suggestions, and hints they have given, either by means of exemplary digressions or by exploiting the especially impressive device of miming rules or precepts while stating them. Part II of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* is justly famed for the brilliant demonstration of both possibilities. Precept plus illustration is the principle of the following passage :

The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*.  
Soft is the Strain when *Zephyr* gently blows  
And the *smooth Stream* in *smoother Numbers* flows ;  
But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,  
The *hoarse, rough Verse* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar.  
When *Ajax* strives, some Rock's vast Weight to throw,  
The Line too *labours*, and the Words move *slow* ;  
Not so, when swift *Camilla* scours the Plain  
Flies o'er th'unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to illustrating ways of creating the impression of rapid movement strictly by means of versification whenever the meaning requires it, the last line, a *functional* Alexandrine, harkens back to, and justifies, the earlier point of criticism regarding the *needless* Alexandrine :

A *needless Alexandrine* ends the Song,  
That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along.

These two lines, incidentally, constitute an example of the coincidence of statement and illustration which, in an even more concise form, applies to such lines as

While *Expletives* their feeble aid *do* join ;  
And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line.

These are no doubt mimetic passage in a verse poetics.<sup>11</sup>

- (5) Yet it is precisely such mimetic passages which help to underline the most important criterion of verse poetics : Hence, mimetic passages are merely illustrations, examples, which either derive from clearly and unambiguously stated principles or lead up to such statements. Hence, the

structure of a verse poetics is a network of such precepts and rules which are either organized in a continuous chain of argument or form an ideally complete system of poetological thought.

(6) Not all verse poetics, it is true, are governed by complete argumentative consistency. Frequently, part of their rhetorical design is an informal conversational tone which is at times completely successful in disguising the argumentative rigor of the structure behind a rather desultory letter style (as in the case of Horace) or a tone of witty parlor discourse (as with Pope). In each instance, however, the coherence and consistency of a verse poetics depends on the logical structure—however much disguised—of the poetological doctrine which it dispenses. This observation now leads to the seventh and last criterion :

(7) Whatever richness of imagery a verse poetics may display, whatever brilliance of versification, sprightly diction, wit—and in the best of the kind, this is quite a lot—all this sumptuous rhetoric has one objective, and one objective only : ornamentation. It serves to provide pleasure and diversion as the poetological doctrine in question is stated, explained, and communicated.

Verse poetics which answer to this description are indeed didactic poetry, are versified theory, instruction, criticism, and polemics.

A summary of what has been said so far would conclude that there are apparently two main types of poetry about poetry : There is the verse poetics, a variant of the didactic poem whose structural principle is the argument which the words used express with the greatest possible precision and elegance. Then there is the mimetic poem about poetry which *is* in words what it expresses with those very words. Whereas a *didactic* poem in principle uses words as signs, just as everyday communicative discourse does, *mimetic* poems also make use of the corporeality of words, of their various sensuous properties.

Such a view certainly is close to a consensus of opinion among the major poets of the modern period. A striking, concise summary of this view is given by Karl Shapiro in the verse essay mentioned above :

Ideas are no more words  
Than phoenixes are birds. The metaphysician  
Deals with ideas as words, the poet with things,  
For in the poet's mind the phoenix sings.<sup>12</sup>

A way of clarifying this passage is to say that the metaphysician—though words are all he has to go on—nevertheless deals in ideas, which, however, are rare birds, as rare as phoenixes. The poet, though also limited to words, tries to flesh out *his* ideas with the quality of sensuous perception, for—even more strangely—he hears the *song* of the phoenix.



Yet certainly we need to go beyond such a systematic distinction of the two main types of poems about poetry, the mimetic and the didactic. Additional insight may be gained by historical differentiation. As a first step (and a first step only) in that direction; the material at hand seems to justify a rough-hewn division into the Classical-Classicist and the post-Classicist periods. There is, to be sure, no intention whatsoever to set these two periods up as monolithic blocks without interior differentiation. But this two-part division into a period up to shortly after 1800 and a period since then nevertheless seems sufficient, at this stage and in this context, to explain some historical connections between the mimetic and didactic types of poetry about poetry.

The first important observation concerns the status of didactic poetry in the Classical-Classicist period. At that time, it was normally regarded as a respected form of poetry, as poetry in the sense of what we now consider an art form. No doubt, the continuous debates about the meaning of poetry, which even in classical antiquity saw arguments that aimed at belittling didactic poetry, even at excluding it from the realm of art proper, are part of the interior differentiations mentioned above and therefore not part of the present considerations.

One thing, however, seems certain beyond dispute : Those more or less entertaining didactic poems like *De Rerum natura* by Lucrece, Virgil's *Georgica*, and the *Ars amatoria* of Ovid are what constitute the proper context of Horace's *Ars poetica*. They all provide clearly formulated statements about various areas of human activity and offer pleasurable instruction. Horace's advice is shrewdly pragmatic :

He will obtain the votes of all with ease  
Who blends the useful with what's sure to please  
In him the reader will amusement find  
And as much moral culture for the mind.<sup>18</sup>

He who knows how to instruct in a pleasing manner is not only a good teacher but—according to Horace—a supreme poet. His work “into future years prolongs his name/And crowns his memory with immortal fame.” Horace was right : Not only his *Ars poetica* as a whole, but also the memorable formulations of detail which it contains, such as the “omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulce” just quoted, have been formative all the way down to the poetic theories of European Classicism. In the Augustan Age, it was considered self-evident that poetry was the skilful dressing-up of traditional views in well-chosen words—and in the 18th century, traditional views were those shared by a self-assured, educated audience. Insofar as Pope's *Essay on Criticism* forms part of this tradition, insofar as it repeats, and approves of, Horatian maxims and

recommendations, it must be considered a didactic poem in this vein. Yet in its time—and this is the crucial fact to be remembered—didactic poetry lived up fully to the poetic ideal. After all, Samuel Johnson, the representative man of letters of the British 18th century, had such a high opinion of the *Essay on Criticism* that his definitive judgment of Pope, in *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), includes the statement: Even had Pope written nothing but this single work, he would, on the strength of it alone, have to be counted "among the first critics and the first poets."<sup>14</sup>

This high estimate of the *Essay*, however, was to undergo drastic changes in the course of the next few decades. It was Joseph Warton himself, the editor of Pope's works, who modified Johnson's assessment in one decisive point: He could not find anything of great *poetic* value in the work. *The Essay on Criticism*, he wrote, "may fairly entitle...[Pope] to the character of being one of the first of critics though surely not of poets." The wholesale dismissal of the *Essay* not only as poetry but also as criticism came from Thomas de Quincey in 1847: In his view, it was "substantially a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication-table, of common places the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat traps."

These changing critical responses to the *Essay on Criticism* are no doubt a limited, though highly significant indicator, of that fundamental reorientation (not only of poetry and its conception) which, in the name of a Romantic revival (better still, reversal), swept away the critical evaluations of the Classical-Classicist era and their supporting poetological views; they are also indicative of drastic changes in the philosophical and epistemological assumptions which led to the series of irreversible revaluations of the image of man and of his capabilities effected by Nietzsche, Darwin, Marx, Frazer, Kierkegaard, and Freud. There is no occasion here to outline the reasons and modalities of this reorientation, especially since it has received much attention elsewhere. But a single aspect deserves special attention in this connection because it helps to pinpoint the changes in the conception of poetry about poetry as well: It concerns the relationship between content and form, and the relationship of both to non-literary reality.

A pivot of the Classicist view is the well-known sentence from the *Essay on Criticism*:

*True Wit* is *Nature* to Advantage drest,

What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Exprest*.<sup>15</sup>

Considering the changes which language and thinking have undergone since the early 18th century, it is well to translate this statement into a more contemporary idiom: Genuine poetry can be found wherever the

natural order of things—which is also the rational order of things and therefore quite naturally includes the additions and improvements of civilization—is expressed with all the appropriate rhetorical ornaments ; and since reality and reason are one, we can say : Genuine poetry takes up received ideas, ideas whose truth is undisputed by a civilized and educated audience, and bestows upon them a more attractive, a more striking linguistic form than they have ever received. The sequence here is as follows : (1) Nature as a given rational order ; (2) received ideas about it ; and (3) words, their beautiful vestment.

The Romantic view reverses this sequence. To quote one representative testimony : In 1817, John Keats stated his conviction that “what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth”—in other words, that is the power of vision and creation in an individual which constitutes the criterion of truth. And in a manner which clearly reduces the relationship between poetry and so-called empirical reality to second rank, he adds : “...must be truth—whether it existed before or not.”<sup>16</sup>

Those who feel that this intuitive remark on the part of a Romantic poet—though it is at the centre of his poetological convictions—is not solid enough to bear such a far-reaching interpretation, may well remember the view on the dialectical form-content identity expressed by Hegel in his influential *Logics* at about the same time.<sup>17</sup> With an assured tone of self-evidence, Hegel postulates this dialectical form-content *identity* for what he calls “true works of art,” and thus confirms a new and rather rigorous conception of art. Accordingly, the art of poetry is transposed into a realm which transcends the Classicist *dichotomy* of form and content, of verbal ornamentation and embellished ideas. Form is no longer a mere vehicle which points to and heightens a poemload full of thought, and the individual ideas in turn are no longer taken to point individually to verities of life. Ever since, a poem can be a “true work of art” only if it is fashioned in a way which employs all the resources of words and language and ties them together in a manner which creates a world out of language and in language, with its physical and intellectual components interfused, a world with a reality of its own—a primary world whose relationship to that world which is usually referred to as “reality” can only be known if the world of the poem is adequately experienced.

For Classicism, form and content were constituting elements of poetic synthesis. Since the post-Classicist view has won prominence, both concepts can, at best serve as aids for critical analysis. And even in that area more adequate terms and procedures have been tried out for quite some time.

### III

Thus, from the point of view of poetological principle there is hardly anything new in the preceding argument. It was spelled out here because it serves well as a basis for a historical interpretation of the main types of poems on poetry and their interrelation, as follows :

- (1) Under a historicist perspective, a verse poetics in its Classical-Classical form, from Horace to Pope and his contemporaries, ought not to be dismissed as "merely" versified criticism. For in the poetological understanding of its time, an *ars poetica* was a significant form of poetic art.
- (2) Due to the fundamental reorientation at the time of the Romantic reversal, the didactic verse poetics has since dropped out of the realm of poetic art ; a verse poetics produced in post-Romantic times is indeed simply versified criticism, however interesting and appealing some of these works may be.
- (3) The successor of the verse poetics in the prestigious position of poetic art is the mimetic poem about poetry as initially described ; such poetological poems are indeed poems in the evaluative sense of the word, i. e. poetic theory as poetry.
- (4) This historical transition can, perhaps, be briefly explained as follows : Mimetic passages in Classical verse poetics (where indeed they existed, though, as shown, in a purely illustrative function) came into their own as independent poetic structures when the prior argument, in which they were suspended as ornamental touches and displays of rhetorical skill, was no longer acceptable as genuine poetry.
- (5) To emphasize such a historical caesura in the early 19th century does not imply that poetological poetry of the mimetic type was altogether unknown in earlier times ; there was even a set poetic exercise known as the "sonnet on the sonnet," which required that description of the difficulties of writing a sonnet should be cast in sonnet form—certainly a precursor of the type of poem of which "The Thought-Fox" is such an outstanding contemporary example.<sup>18</sup> But the precise topology of such poems is still largely in the dark, for the simple reason that whenever research turned its attention to poems on poetry, the much more prestigious verse poetics attracted more attention. Even Wallace and Taaffe, in their anthology, refrain from any historical analysis and differentiation ; the order they impose on their material is strictly a subject matter classification.<sup>19</sup>

But instead of moving further into the direction of historical analysis, the final considerations, on this occasion, are devoted to another modern poem in order to show that, while the title "*Ars poetica*" may be preserved, even poems with such a title may belong to the mimetic type

and therefore may fall into the realm of art in its modern sense. The poem is one which René Wellek has cited among his examples of mere meta-poetry : Arachibald MacLeish's 1924 poem, "Ars poetica."<sup>20</sup>

1. A poem should be palpable and mute (1)  
As a globed fruit,
2. Dumb (2)  
As old medallions to the thumb,
3. Silent as the sleeve-worn stone (3)  
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—
4. A poem should be wordless (4)  
As the flight of birds.
5. A poem should be motionless in time (5)  
As the moon climbs,
6. Leaving, as the moon releases  
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,
7. Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,  
Memory by memory the mind—
8. A poem should be motionless in time (5)  
As the moon climbs.
9. A poem should be equal to : (4)  
Not true.
10. For all the history of grief (3)  
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.
11. For love (2)  
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—
12. A poem should not mean (1)  
But be.

The expectations raised by the title are apparently made good in the very first line by the first four words : "A poem should be..." What a poem should be—isn't that the linguistic gesture most appropriate to a prescriptive verse poetics ? And this gesture is indeed maintained throughout as the dominating and organizing syntax element : It reappears anaphora-like six times throughout the poem and serves to mark the tripart division of the poem. This division is reinforced by the fact that the three parts are structured alike internally : The hyphen after couplets three, five, and seven, after "grown," "mind", and "sea," indicate that couplets four, eight, and twelve each sum up the previous three. The poem's structure, then, differentiates the six occurrences of the formula, "A poem should..." into three introductory and three summarizing ones.

Evidently, the title, together with the first occurrence of the phrase "A poem should...", invites the reader to expect something perhaps as

Horatian as "teach" or "delight." But nothing of that order follows. As soon as the expectation has been raised, it is utterly disregarded. None of the usual references to poetic diction or verbal style occurs in the entire poem. It is certainly out of the ordinary that the first quality actually called for is one of touch ("palpable"), and downright paradoxical that the second is muteness. In fact, muteness is emphasized in the first four couplets ("mute"—"dumb"—"silent"—"wordless") and coexists with images of touch in the first three. Their cooperation suggests the eloquence of silent objects: the medallion which may reveal some of its worth to the scrutinizing touch of fingers; the moss-covered tone window-sills whose surfaces, ever so slightly worn down by the elbows of generations of people leaning out, turn them—like poems—into testimonials of past contemplative life, testimonials which are certainly quite indirect and revealing only to a very attentive observer. The paradoxical wordlessness of the poem is summarized in the flight of birds.

The second part, too, begins with a paradoxical demand: The poem, like the rising moon, should be motionless in time. Movement, the image suggests, is dissolved into a sequence of ever so slightly different stills, like on a cinematographic film, and it is in this sequence of static moments that the poem arises from the mind of the poet and sinks into that of the reader. This view, incidentally, has a background in the Imagist poetics in whose wider tradition MacLeish worked in the early twenties; it reminds the reader at each step of the reading process to try and visualize whatever he has read up to this point as a spatial configuration. Precisely this suggestion is mimed by elements of structure of this poem, in the first place by the fact that the couplet which summarizes the central part of the poem is verabally identical with that which introduces it—"A poem should be motionless in time/As the moon climbs."

The two couplets thus serve as a framing device which sets off this moony middle part from the rest of the poem and bestows on it the illusion of being a static image: The moon-scene itself takes on something of the quality of a medallion or miniature painting or carving, or, maybe, of a photo. The second structural trait which supports this impression that the middle part in a sense is lifted out of the rest is the inverted parallelism of the couplets in parts I and III of the poem which is suggested by the numbers 1-5 printed in the right-hand margin and which will be explained in a moment.

The third part also begins with a paradoxical demand upon the poem, one which seems to be in contrast to the most basic of all traditional aesthetic principles, Classical as well as Romantic. Think of the Classical triad of beauty, truth, and goodness. Or o

"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty" ! But here : "A poem should be equal to/Not true." Surely, this couplet ought not to be misunderstood as an invitation to mendacity in poetry. After all, the words are not "A poem should not be true", but "equal to/Not true." What follows makes it abundantly clear that the equation here is not between poetry and falsehood but between poetry and a realm beyond verification and falsification : Instead of an abstract conceptual statement which is open to verification and falsification, poetry offers concrete verbal objects which simply exist. Instead of a history of grief (which would be open to debate : what, after all, is grief ?), MacLeish offers an image, a vignette, which, alluding to one or more of Ezra Pound's poems from his "imagiste" phase, clearly evokes loneliness after separation.<sup>21</sup> And instead of saying "love" (which tends to call up its opposite or negation), the poem posits one or two appropriate images which are immune to the temptations of dialectics.

In this way, the third part of the poem leads up to the final couplet which, at first glance, might after all look like an anachronism carried over from a didactic verse poetics : "A poem should not mean /But be." Yet what has gone before bestows a world of meaning upon these lines (which, if looked upon in isolation, would indeed be a simple declarative statement saying that a poem should not mean anything). Just as here, for the first time in the poem, the auxiliary verb "to be" is transformed into the full verb, the context transforms this apparently declarative statement into something quite different from what it seems to say.

A poem—and this is the meaning enforced by the pressure of the context—should go beyond mere saying or stating, should, for example, go beyond such abstract nouns as "grief" and "love," to create a structure, a world of language and in language which achieves something like sensuous, physical tangibility, which exists, which is, not like ideas, but "in things." Note the emphasis on *being* by the delay of the transformed auxiliary from five times "A poem should be [this]," "A poem should be [that]" to "A poem should .be"—a device of verse music suggesting the held chord at the end, say, of a piece of organ music. Of course, being what it is, a poem also has meaning, the meaning of its existence.

A poetological poem of this type differs decisively from that of the didactic verse poetics. There, the examples or illustrations (which occasionally and in themselves may achieve a similar ontological status), are summarized in clearly and distinctly stated rules and precepts which can be fully understood even if separated from their proper context. In MacLeish's "Ars Poetica," on the other hand, the context changes apparently unambiguous statements such as the final couplet. This indicates that in MacLeish's poetological poem the apparent examples are more than

ornamental illustrations : They are essential components of the poetic structure.

There is a second way in which the apprent examples take on a structural function. Evidently, the motifs embodied in the four couplets of the first part recur, but in inverted order, in those of the third part. For if it is correct that the phrase "Not true" in the fourth to the last couplet signalizes a preference for a type of poetic language which is as physically concrete as language can get, then a metonymic relationship may be said to connect this passage with the wordless flight of birds in the fourth. The connection between the explicit reference to "history" in the third to the last couplet and the history-implying image of the sleeve-worn ledges in the third is as evident as is that between "love" in the second to the last and a medallion, which is frequently worn as a love token, in the second. And the rejection of poetry as declarative statement, implicit in the first couplet, has become explicit in the last.

The structure of the poem, then, may be defined as an overlay of two patterns : a linear development towards what at first glance appears as a straightforward statement in the end, and two catenations of motifs starting at both ends and converging on the middle section which, framed by the fifth and fifth to the last couplets, is highlighted like a medallion or perhaps like an icon.

As in Ted Hughes' "The Thought-Fox," the structure of the poem acts out, imitates, embodies what can be abstracted as its poetological substance. To be quite specific : The poetological substance of this poem does not reside in the last two lines (which are the "moral of the tale" only in appearance) or in any other two or four or six lines : Rather, it resides in the overall structure of the poem. Poetic theory has become a poem, a perfect poem in the modern sense of the word. It acts out what it says, it performs its content. It imitates its meaning in sensuous language in such a way as to make its sensuous-linguistic existence its meaning.

And now we can transplant the last two lines of MacLeish's poetological poem into the present context as the appropriate conclusion :

A poem should not mean  
But be.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Since tradition disagrees as to whether this marvelous feat was performed in a swamp (*Wunderbare Reisen...des Freyherrn von Munchhausen* [London 1786], pp. 54-55) or in a pond (*The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen* [New York n.d.], p. 89), I beg to submit that it may have taken place where I say it did.
2. T. Hughes, "The Thought-Fox," *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), p.9; the quotation from *Poetry in the Making: An Anthology of Poems and Programmes from 'Listening and Writing'* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967) is from p. 17.
3. Cf. T.S. Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry" (1953), *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), esp. pp. 96-98. There, Eliot explicitly speaks of an "obscure impulse. He [the poet] does not know what he has to say until he has said it." For G. Benn, cf. "Probleme der Lyrik" (1947), *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. IV (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1968), esp. pp. 1070-71, 1073.
4. For this reason, I disagree with Keith Sagar who says about the early animal poems of Hughes: "Of these 'The Thought-Fox,' however vividly present in the poem the fox may be, is purely metaphorical" (*The Art of Ted Hughes* [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975], p.17). On the other hand, I would agree with his view that the "language mimes in sound and rhythm what it describes" (p.19). Sagar hardly touches upon the poetological aspect of this poem.
5. The translation of "mimetic," as used here, into semiotic terminology, is "iconic"; yet cf. note 18.
6. Cf. R. Wellek, *Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), esp. pp. 260-62.
7. Cf. *Poems on Poetry: The Mirror's Garland*, ed. R. Wallace & J.G. Taaffe (New York: Dutton, 1965).
8. Cf. *Amerikanische Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. A. Weber & D. Haack (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 175-88.
9. This interesting "hypothesis," as he himself calls it, "about the origin and intention of Horace's Epistle to the Pisos," is submitted by C.M. Wieland in the introduction to his German translation. Cf. *Werke*, ed. F. Martini and H.W. Seiffert, vol. 5 (München: Hanser, 1968), 591-93.
10. A. Pope, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, vol. I: *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, ed. A. Audra & A. Williams (London/New Haven: Methuen/Yale Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 281-82; the following two quotations are from pp. 280 and 278 respectively.
11. It is in this connection that P.M. Sparks' argument makes the most sense, namely that there are instances in the poetry of Pope where images serve an expressive function (cf. *An Argument of Images: The Poetry of Alexander Pope* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971]).
12. K. Shapiro, *Essay on Rime* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), p.1.
13. *The Art of Poetry of Horace with Translation in Prose and Verse* by D. [aniel] Bagot (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1858), p. 63.
14. These and the following two evaluative statements have been taken from the Introduction to the *Essay on Criticism, Twickenham Edition* vol. I, p. 208.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-73.
16. J. Keats, Letter to Bailey, 22 November 1817, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. M.B. Forman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), p.67.

17. Cf. G.F.W. Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, Bd. 8 (Stuttgart : Fromann, 1961), pp. 302-03.

18. Cf. Matthew Russell, *Sonnets on the Sonnet : An Anthology* (London : 1898) ; L.E. Kastner, "Concerning the Sonnet of the Sonnet," *Modern Language Review*, 11:2 (April 1916), 205-11.

19. I am aware that my use of the term "mimetic" is at variance with received critical usage. A critical position based on the idea of "imitation" traditionally has been one for which the relationship between the artefact and the world around it is the most important critical issue, the leading question : "Is this work true to 'Nature' ?" (Cf. M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror And the Lamp : Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* [London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1953], pp. 8-14). This is the the orientation which, after all, Plato and, with modifications, Aristotel have in common ; together with the imitation of the ancient models, imitation of Nature is the predominant Classicist principle ; it was revived by 19th century Realism and Naturalism in the image of the mirror in the roadway ; and it is the basis of censorship exerted by the Marxist-Leninist cultural functionary. Since all these positions are concerned with the way in which a work of art refers to "reality" (which is usually regarded as "primary," hence the work as "derived from reality"), I suggest that the term "referential" is better applicable than "mimetic." The latter term thus becomes available and is here employed to describe a special relationship between verbal form and semantic meaning in a poem. Ludwig Wittgenstein discusses such a relationship where script "depicts the facts that it describes" in a general way in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4. 016, in the context of 4.0031-4.022 (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 36-41 ; Rudolf Carnap uses the term "autonymy" to identify a linguistic expression which is its own designation (cf. *The Logical Syntax of Language*, Pt. IV, § 42 [London : Kegan Paul, etc., 1937], p. 156). I take courage in using the term "mimesis" in the sense which I have proposed in this paper, because simultaneously and, of course, independently, it was also so applied by William K. Wimsatt in a short but potentially influential paper, "In Search of Verbal Mimesis," *The Day of the Leopards* (New Haven, Conn. : Yale Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 57-73.

20. A. MacLeish, *New and Collected Poems, 1917-1972* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp.106-07.

The subsequent interpretation owes much to Professor Alfred Behrmann of Berlin who joined me in teaching a course on poems on poetry in Winter 1974-75 ; literature on this poem can be found in G.H. Blanke, "Archibald MacLeish : 'Ars Poetica,'" *Jahrbuch fur Amerikastudien* 13 (1968), 236-45.

21. From E. Pound, *Personae : The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York : Liveright, 1926) : "A wet leaf that clings to the threshold" ("Liu Ch'e," p.108) comes closest ; emotionally (though not botanically) very similar is the final line of "Gentildonna," "Grey olive leaves beneath the rain-cold sky" (p.92). The image, now emotionally not clearly defined, recurs for the rose-leaves or petals that have fallen into the fountain : "Their ochre clings to the stone" ("Ts' Ai Chi'H," p.108) ; despite Pound's own explication, a "deathly" feel inheres in the petals which cling to the last line of "In a Station of the Metro" : "Petals, on a wet black bough" (p.109).

# THE AUTHOR'S VOICE IN GEORGE MEREDITH'S NOVELS

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A. SINHA

THE perspective requires to be established at the outset. For, till a very short while ago, till some theorists<sup>1</sup> effectively demolished the myth that omniscience is an "untutored" and lazy approach,<sup>2</sup> the author's voice used to be considered in a major body of criticism as a deplorable, at best a sufferable element in old-fashioned novels. Firstly, I would contend that the author's voice abides in all fiction—as those recent theorists have shown—and the idea requires emphasis as the ground is not yet entirely free of old suspicions. Secondly, the author's voice in itself should not be taken as an "intrusion": the question is whether it contributes to the author's creative intention; it is only when it interferes with this intention that it becomes really an intrusion, otherwise not. Finally, omniscience is not just a blanket-term—a label to be clamped down on an author. It is primarily technique—not the absence of technique—, one of the ways in which an author gives form, an image to his materials and theme.

To my mind, what primarily matters in the discussion of an author's omniscience is the *kind* of use he makes of it—for instance, whether he makes his authorial voice explicit and whole-hearted (e.g., Fielding, Thackeray, Forster), explicit and partial (e.g., Jane Austen, Conrad), or peripheral, some-times unavowed (e. g., James, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner), and so forth. Even such classifications are not conclusive, for after all the author's individual approach ultimately determines the artistic relevance, or otherwise, of omniscience in his novels. As for Meredith, the omniscient point of view is assuredly a major aspect of his technique (it is not *the* major one, though—his various, interesting experiments in oblique narration have gone rather uncared for in criticism); this requires critical attention—which has not been properly accorded to it—for an adequate appraisal of his fictional art. I propose in this essay to examine the salient features of the omniscient author convention, and particularly the functions they perform, in Meredith's novels.

Meredith was deliberate in his use of omniscience, holding it at a discount, and was aware of the limitations it might be open to. While my subsequent examination of his use of the technique will bear this out, this is seen to be corroborated by some of the theoretical views he held on the subject. Sometimes his awareness is forthright, as for instance, in

*Sandra Belloni* (1864), where he makes one of his narrators say that the characters in that novel "move themselves,... and no arbitrary hand has posted them to bring about any event and heap the catastrophe"<sup>3</sup> —a view which no doubt resembles Jamesian and post-Jamesian aesthetic of the novel; then there are also his ironical defences of omniscience in his novels, underscored by a regret for having had to resort to it.<sup>4</sup> Such views surely indicate that at least *his* approach to omniscience was far from being an "untutored" one.

Finally, as the starting-point of my discussion, I would say that omniscience is something more than a blanket-term in another sense, too. For the author's voice accommodates many devices — commentary, summary or panorama, block-characterization, dips into characters' minds, shifts in points of view, and so forth. Although these are often intertwined with one another, it is profitable to look at them separately. My chief point of discussion will be Meredith's use of commentary because this is where he has been found and objected to as most "authorial,"<sup>5</sup> but I shall at first discuss the other elements of his omniscience as the necessary context to this examination.

## II

As for "dips" and "shifts", I shall not devote any space to them, because these happen to be very common elements of omniscience of all kinds, even modern, "impersonal" novelists not being free of them, and a discussion of their use cannot reveal anything special in Meredith. Moreover, our expectation while reading him is certainly not a consistency in point of view as, say, in the case of James. The three other major features of omniscience can be considered to fall more within a conventional or "old-fashioned" mode. Now, block-characterisation, or the expository description of a character in the manner of an essay,<sup>6</sup> appears rather infrequently in his novels. For example, the Countess de Saldar and her two sisters in *Evan Harrington* (1861), are to some extent block-characterized in the expository chapter III, but this is so very partial—the greater and larger part of the characterization of the Countess being done through her actions—that it should not count very much. In *Vittoria* (1867), we see this in the characterization of the Chief (pp. 9-10), of Count Serabiglione (pp. 114-17) and of Countess Ammiani (pp. 184-85); but each is a minor character, occupying very little space, a part of the epical superfluity of this particular novel, and the major characters are all more often than not dramatically characterized through their actions, speeches, and thoughts in course of the narration. In *Beauchamp's Career* (1875), we have an expository characterization of Romfrey (pp. 14-9), a major character; but, notwith-

standing the fact that this fits in with the generally overt omniscient form of the earlier chapters (I-XI) it shines as an exception, for none of the other major characters including the hero Beauchamp, is block-characterized ; they are mainly left to dramatic characterization. It may be added that scanty as these block-characterizations are, they are also free of external descriptions of characters, something that is ordinarily associated with the device.<sup>7</sup> Meredith does it noticeably once, in the above-mentioned portrait of Mazzini ("the Chief") in *Vittoria*, and the description is perhaps provoked by the temptation to inject a little vividness into a hotly topical personality of the day. On the whole, Meredith prefers the dramatic unfurling of character, and after *Beauchamp's Career*, he rarely resorts to authorial comment as a major means of characterization.

It is on the question of "panoramic" surveys or summaries that one needs to be a bit more expansive. As is known, the degree of omniscience in third-person narration ( of whatever kind ) corresponds with the distance in time which the author effects between the reader and the action. Panoramic or long-distance narration stands at one of its extremes, scenic or close-range narration at the other. Now, *Diana* (1885) is the only novel by Meredith which is freely omniscient in the former sense, large and important parts of its action being narrated in panoramic coverages of time, which enfold scenic bits in their sweep (e.g., in chs. XIV, XV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXIV, XXXVI, XXXIX). In most novels, Meredith prefers to present the bulk of story as immediately as possible though not always in its "pure", modern form, and uses panorama for temporary and secondary purposes. This tendency can be seen even from his first novel, *Richard Feverel* (1859). The novel opens with a short, panoramic survey of Sir Austin's past in chapter I, which gives us not the main story but its antecedents. After the main action opens in chapter II, with the statement, "October shone royally on Richard's fourteenth birthday" (p.10), our attention is drawn to what keeps on happening immediately in front of us and at a particularized time ; thenceforward the story proceeds in a succession of roughly scenic sequences till the end. There are only occasional short panoramas which appear in the body of the narration (see, e.g., pp.388-89, 378-87, 459-61, 513-17). Their chief function is to bridge in an economic manner the short time-gaps between the successive flows of more or less scenic narration, not outweighing the later. As the story is thus carried by its own momentum, as it were, the narrator is automatically reduced to the role of a contemporaneous observer with a "limited" omniscience, from that of a lofty, all-knowing surveyor ; his control over the narrative thereby becomes more implicit than explicit. Even

if we look at a more "conventional" novel, say *Beauchamp's Career*, the predominance of the same tendency is seen. The first disjointed episodes of the early youth of Beauchamp are frequently narrated in the panoramic form in the first four chapters (e.g., pp. 1-10, 20-5, 34-8, 40-7); the same applies to the incidents preparatory to Beauchamp's chief adventures in England, in chapter XI (pp. 92-103). But when these adventures—which constitute the long, central action—start in chapter XII and continue upto chapter LV (ending in p. 616), the "contemporaneous" observer's narration is more or less adopted, save in occasional, subservient summaries (e.g., in chs. XXIX, XXXVIII). Close-range narration is given a still greater prominence in most of the other novels. *Sandra Belloni* (1864), for all its variously omniscient intrusions, seldom indulges in overt, panoramic manipulations. Its sequel, *Vittoria*, gives a fully constituted panorama only in the Epilogue which falls beyond the pale of the main action. This main action is presented chiefly in the contemporaneous manner except for a short though noticeable summary in the beginning of chapter XXIX (p. 386)—which bridges the time-gap between the 1847 and the 1848 phases of the action—and some even shorter summaries.<sup>8</sup> The tendency is further matured in the shorter as well as in the later works (save *The Tragic Comedians* (1880)). For example, each of the works, *The House on the Beach* (1877), *The Egoist* (1879), and *Lord Ormont* (1894), after presenting a panoramic opening (in their chapters I, II-V, and I-II, respectively),<sup>9</sup> rigorously follow a succession of close-range, narrative sequences to the end.<sup>10</sup> Almost the same is done in *Chloe* (1879), with only one panoramic interruption in chapter IV (Memorial ed., XXI, pp. 217-21), which is meant to serve as a preamble to the Duchess's escapade in Bath (ch. IV onwards) and to bridge the time-gap between the beau's meeting with her (ch. III) and this event. In *One of Our conquerors* (1891), the panoramas are neatly placed in what is one of the most scenic patterns of Meredith's narratives. The narration of the main action which runs upto Victor's catastrophe (pp. 1-510) is chiefly contemporaneous, followed by a brief panorama of a year (pp. 510-14), functionally affiliated to the major action. Now, in the body of this narration of the main action, there are four short, subservient panoramas worth any name (pp. 122-29, 202-15, 297-300, 477-82), which link up in a rhythmical manner five long sequences of more or less scenic action, and are thus much more schematized than in the previous novels. Thus, Meredith's tendency towards limiting his omniscience is so remarkable that if, as Geoffrey Tillotson says, Thackeray's scenes are influenced by his panoramas,<sup>11</sup> it may be said that Meredith's panoramas are conditioned by his basic propulsion to scenic narration. On the whole, his external, third

person narration of events gives us more the sense of accompanying the action rather than of overlooking it.

What we have so far seen surely shows that Meredith is to a great extent free of the identification with the familiar image of an all-controlling, ubiquitous author. However, the ultimate test of his "author's voice" is in his use of "intrusive" commentaries, which he himself so aptly described as "interdrones" (in the posthumously published *Celt and Saxon*, 1910, p. 183).

### III

It requires to be pointed out that Meredith's commentaries are not for him an obvious resort. Firstly, as regards the social connotation of his commentaries, these are not the necessary overflow of a spirit of social communion in him, of a desire to share with the readers publicly accepted norms as is the case with the majority of eighteenth and nineteenth-century novelists.<sup>12</sup> As the stories illustrate, he rather seeks to establish a private norm of individual conduct and psychology in deviation from social norms.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, while commentaries are partly expected to *tell* the reader the meanings and significances of the stories, Meredith largely communicates such meanings through indirect methods, such as repetition of themes, verbal echoes, parallelisms, images, and so forth. Thirdly, he rarely resorts to the extended commentary of the Fielding-Thackeray type: he uses this noticeable only once, in *Celt and Saxon* (ch. XIII); while the "Prelude" in *The Egoist* and ch. I of *Diana* would also appear to be so, large parts of them are not authorial but dramatic.

There are only two novels worth mentioning which considerably suffer from really interfering commentaries. These are the early *Evan Harrington* and *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), in which there is an unabashed, and often unwarranted display of the author's "I".<sup>14</sup> Although not completely free from such disturbing comments, others novels are comparatively wanting in them.<sup>15</sup> It does not follow, however, that this was for Meredith a crude, immature stage in novel-writing: for *Richard Feverel*, which precedes both these novels, is relatively free of such disturbances. Once or twice the author makes intrusive comments in minor contexts (e.g., p. 355), but these are sunk in the delightfully ironical tone that pervades the writing throughout. The truth, rather, is that *Evan Harrington* and *Rhoda Fleming* were written when Meredith was a journeyman groping for his form, and in these he experimented with a deliberate backslide into the Thackerayesque-Trollopean narrative style. Otherwise, Meredith's major commentaries are mostly functional, as I shall now show. For the sake of convenience in discussion, I shall

divide them into several classes, although the classes overlap and are not conclusive.

First, let us consider the "self-conscious" commentaries<sup>16</sup> in which Meredith voices his opinions on fiction in general as also on particular works he is writing. This practice, traceable to Fielding, is held to be objectionable on the ground that the author's reminders of his being an author destroys the illusion of the story. I must point out that in Meredith's case these are not prompted by an urge towards a garrulous showmanship but by the *narrative* necessity to show the reader that he was writing a new kind of novel. This newness chiefly consists in his emphasis on the individual conduct and psychology of the characters. Since his novels sometimes show superficial resemblances with some existing, conventional types of fiction,<sup>17</sup> he employs these commentaries to help the readers recognize the speciality of his novels and thereby to guide them to the right meanings by countering other expectations. Thus the occasional theoretical digressions in *Sandra Belloni* (see, e.g., pp. 110-11, 113-14, 483) help us realize the fact that the exposure of sentimentalism, part of the novel's theme, is achieved on a *psychological* plane through the exhibition of the complicated psychology of sentimentalists like Wilfrid, and not in the manner of a Thackerayan social satire which we might otherwise consider the novel to be. Likewise, the continual theoretical comments in *Beauchamp's Career*, apparently a loose string of episodes, help us understand that the unity of the novel very much depends on the psychological motivation of Beauchamp's character. These insist that the novel is neither a romance nor a mystery story nor a naturalistic work—in any of which categories Beauchamp's story could be apparently fitted (p. 39), but is one which presents characters "at blood-heat", illustrates motives (p. 7) and "the clock-work of brain" (p. 553), and does not present external reality. This clarifies and heightens our understanding of the novel as an exhibition of character and not as a biographical-cum-picaresque story which form, too, it superficially resembles. I shall not multiply instances—more are covered by my subsequent discussions. What needs to be pointed out is that by mostly highlighting the psychological impulses behind the stories, the comments provide the correct perspective which might be missed by the readers in the context of their acquaintance with most other Victorian novels. These commentaries, the release of the tension of a mind conscious of having left the beaten track are thus pertinent and are not fluid self-revelations.

This general function apart, these self-conscious commentaries sometimes perform specific roles as essential reflections of the distinctive meanings of the novels where they occur, and reveal a maturer level of



art. Thus, for instance, the famous theory of fiction propounded in chapter I of *Diana* is found to be functional by being an illumination of the character of the heroine. Since it is too long to be fully quoted, I shall refer only to its central theme. According to this theory, "Philosophy", which only can be the basis of true fiction, espouses neither the "rose-pink" nor the "dirty-drab" but "active, mind-beaten, but ascending souls" (pp. 15-6), nourishes itself on "brainstuff" which is "internal history" (p. 17), is meant for a minority (p. 18), derides "sentimentalism" (p. 16), and projects the ideal of the "right heroical woman" (p. 19). As we read the story later, we find that this ideal of fiction indirectly serves as an analogue of Diana who, as the author later informs us, is "not an ignorant-innocent, nor a guileless person...often wrestling with her terrestrial nature nobly ; and a growing soul" (p. 399), who "muses on actual life, and fatigues with the exercise of brains" (p. 441). Secondly, this theory helps us understand Diana in another and a more important way ; this it does by being an analogue of the attitude, to life and literature, of Diana as an authoress. She, a novelist, likewise derides popular fiction (e. g., pp. 18, 203) and once denounced sentimentalism in a famous sentence (p. 12 ; the author himself quotes from this phrase to clarify his own attitude much later in p. 399). Therefore, by expounding the "Philosophy", which thus acts as an image of Diana's way of life, the author involves us in an identification with her viewpoint which continues throughout the novel. Then again, this serves a rhetorical purpose in the narration of Diana's story. As she holds the same attitude as the author's, she needs must have the ideal personality ; yet we see in the novel that she errs and suffers because of her blunders. This suggests that her vision of truth, however correct, is only abstract and intellectual, unsupported by an emotional realization, and cannot be of use to her unless she is able to embody it in her life : eventually she achieves this at the end through her acceptance of Redworth (chs. XLII, XLIII). The "theoretical" commentary, therefore, performs actually a narrative function by persuading us that this is the story of an unpractical but clever and good woman who belongs to the right norm of life, and who, prevented at first by her egoism, ultimately realizes the norm by curing herself of the drawback.

In my next instance, taken from *Beauchamp's Career*, Meredith stands apart and invites the reader to look at Beauchamp not as a character in the novel's world but as his created being. This, incidentally, is not a "theory" proper, but an opinion on the work itself, another form of self-conscious commentary. This is a long commentary on Beauchamp as a "hero" :

...To be a public favourite is his last thought... With every inducement to offer himself for a romantic figure, he despises the pomades and curling irons of modern romance. Meantime the exhibition of a hero whom circumstances overcome, and who does not weep or ask you for a tear... must run the chances of a novelty... Nursery Legitimists [writers of romances and sensational stories] will be against him to a man; Republicans [naturalists] likewise... (pp. 38-9)

The purpose of this commentary is to help the reader have the right sort of response to Beauchamp and to the story, which presents a kind of hero new to popular tastes, despite his superficial similarities to a romantic idol. Meredith does this through a curious interlocking of Beauchamp the reader's hero-image and Beauchamp the person in the story. Now, Beauchamp (the "hero") is liable to offend the prejudices of readers fed on popular novels, although he has "every inducement to offer himself as a romantic figure" to fit in a sentimentally conceived, "striking" story of action. It is against such an expectation that Meredith prepares his readers by pointing out that "to be a public favourite is his last thought". The noticeable thing is that this mock-serious picture of the hero as if deciding of his free will whether to be romantic or not, is an image of Beauchamp the person in the story, whose last thought, too, is to be a public favourite and who offends the prejudices of his uncle and the members of his society in general—as the entire story shows. The imagined objection of the contemporary novelists and the average readers to the novel is therefore an analogue of the discomfort which Beauchamp's world feels about him; the author's own attitude to his novel (as revealed in the passage) is thus analogous to the *ideal* reader's attitude to Beauchamp. In this manner, the view of fiction illustrated in the novel becomes a metaphorical way of high-lighting the unconventionality of Beauchamp's character.

The next type of commentary that I shall discuss is the author's "manipulating" voice which shows his control over the story's materials. These are "foreknowledges" or anticipations whereby Meredith as author "intrudes" with his superior knowledge to tell us of future events. However, their principal object is not the Trollopean aim to let the reader look into the mechanics of the story and satisfy his curiosity or to display the author's knowledge and right, but to produce *narrative effects* which would have been otherwise impossible.

The last lines of chapter I of *Richard Feverel*, for instance, end in an anticipation which is ironical in function. 'He (Sir Austin) had a system of education for his son. *How it worked we shall see*' (p. 10, my italics). Apparently, the lines innocently prepare us for the later operation of the

system, illustrated in the course of the story. But that is not the chief thing. The effect of the anticipation here lies in the mock-simple, staccato, tongue-in-cheek tone which these lines carry from the earlier characterization of Sir Austin (see, e. g., pp. 6, 8, 9-10), and which gives us another, implied meaning: "We shall see that it did not work." As the story gradually unfolds, and we see that the "system" works itself to its destruction step by step till the tragic conclusion, this implied meaning is found to be corroborated. This exposure of the system is made in the story, as every reader notices, through irony. The author's apparently neutral tone in the commentary heightens this irony, and helps the reader have the necessary perspective from the very beginning.

Likewise, a functional use is given to the key anticipation in the beginning of *Rhoda Fleming*, where, after a mock-serious paragraph on Kentish women, the author suddenly becomes serious in a quite poetic manner, obviously to draw special attention to the passage:

My plain story is of two Kentish damsels, and runs from a home of flowers into regions where flowers are few and sickly, on to where the flowers which breathe sweet breath have been proved in mortal fire. (p. 1)

This, in so many words, projects us into the future adventures of the sisters Rhoda and Dahlia from Queen Anne's Farm in their Kentish village to London and then back to the village, which make the story. However, the story is not as "plain" as it is stated, and the images couching it make all the difference. The "home of flowers" refers to the world of nature in Queen Anne's farm, where the two sisters blossom in their maidenly innocence; the region of "few and sickly" flowers suggests the sophisticated, arid world of London where this innocence later wilts and drops; the mixed metaphor in the final clause ("flower proved in fire") anticipates the theme of ordeal—the chastening of Rhoda's and Dahlia's womanhood, which is rounded up by a "fire"-metaphor in the novel's end (p. 499). Thus the function of the anticipation is to guide us into the *inner meaning* of Rhoda's and Dahlia's story, which we can carry along as we read. It also gives us a clue to the structure. In the final clause, the author comments that the story runs "on to where etc.", while we see that the story *physically* runs back to the Kentish village. The phrase thus helps us see that the end of the journey in the village does not imply a simple back-to-Nature romanticism; supported by the final image which is different from the first one, the phrase metaphorically represents the synthesis of the story—the "new" fact of Dahlia's purification achieved back in the same-old village—and helps our understanding of the cyclical structure of the novel.

The last type of commentary is evaluative—generalizations on life, conduct, or society.<sup>18</sup> Generalizing commentary in Meredith's novels as in novels in general is sometimes seen in brief lines, phrases and adjectives intertwined with the narration. I would rather bypass these. But at least one critic, that is, J. W. Beach, has criticized Meredith for his "interference" in such short commentaries, by referring to a passage from *Richard Feverel* (pp. 118-19).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, before I proceed to consider the longer commentaries which are my chief subject, I shall briefly digress by indicating the narrative necessity of such interlaced commentaries by examining some of the points of Beach's disapproval of the passage. This lyrical description of nature appears in the narration of Richard advancing towards Lucy in a boat. Beach's objections are particularly directed to certain normative expressions in this description ; but it can be seen that he considers these expressions mostly out of their contexts. For example, the expression, "hung a daughter of earth," implicitly compares Lucy with the flowers by echoing the previous line which is about hanging meadow-sweet ; thus it visualizes her as an integral part of the beauty of Nature and contributes to her characterization. Likewise, "this blooming young person", Beach's sore point, is an imagistic and not a sentimental description that furthers this comparison with flowers. Again, "the damsel" is a very definite construction of the present, romantic point of view or Richard who is accustomed to thinking and feeling in terms of knight-errantry, and also continues the irony that has been running through the passage. All the eleven expressions objected to by Beach in the passage could be thus proved to be functional in the scene ; while space forbids any such analysis ( and it is unnecessary), I believe these instances serve the purpose.

I shall now proceed to examine the more conspicuous commentaries, the longer ones. One aspect of these is sometimes seen in the author's role as a social or political commentator on the background of his novels. It has to be pointed out at first that the works where Meredith does this to any noticeable extent are few in number : *Vittoria*, *Beauchamp's Career*, *Celt and Saxon*, and *One of Our Conquerors* ; this indicates the remarkable restraint he put on the temptation to "lecture" on some of his pet themes. I shall concentrate on *Beauchamp's Career*, as this is where such commentaries are more prominent than elsewhere ; these are comments, mixed with summaries, on the mid-nineteenth century English political background, appearing at narrative intervals. Their function, however, can be understood in the context of the particular fact that although the work has been described as a political novel,<sup>20</sup> its theme is predominantly personal. This consists in working a "tragic-comic"

response in the reader's mind to the various attempts at self-expression, made by Beauchamp, a quixotic idealist possessed, as it were, by the spirit of a mediaeval knight-errant. As the story shows, the conflict of his Radicalism with Toryism expresses the clash between his romantic impulses and reality, which is revealed alike by his non-political activities. Correspondingly, the function of the "political" commentaries is seen to be an oblique illumination of this personal theme, and in this light sometimes also of the structure of the story.

This general character of the political commentaries in *Beauchamp's Career* can be substantiated by looking at some of their *particular* functions. For instance, in the very beginning of the novel, the author gives a mock-serious summary of public reactions to the threat of a French invasion, and thereby exposes the methods of the bureaucracy and of the press for manipulating the people with a false scare (pp. 1-7). We soon learn that at the time of the threat of the invasion, Beauchamp supremely disregards public sentiment, and is so innocent of the contrived political situation that he even tosses a boyish personal challenge to the French guards (pp. 7-9). Appearing in conjunction with this fact, our superior knowledge, which is supplied by the commentary, implicitly indicates Beauchamp's immaturity and romantic temperament. Moreover, this gives a structural clue to Beauchamp's major activities later on, when he directly confronts such political methods during his Parliamentary election-campaign and strives helplessly against them (chs. XIV-XXVII). The summarizing commentary on the political situation before and during the Crimean War (pp. 36-7) performs a like function. It shows the whole nation to be manouvered by politicians into an excited support for the war, the only exception being the dissenting voice of a Radical, "a political poacher". Now, this helps us isolate the non-conformist, mass-scorning character of Beauchamp who, although he takes part in the war with a romantic gusto (e.g., pp. 41-3), opposes the national frenzy by supporting this very person (p. 38). This anticipates the central phase of his career when, in a similar fashion, he devotedly supports the Radical Dr. Shrapel against his family and against the entire community of Bevisham and the neighbouring localities (e.g., chs. XXIX-XXXVIII). Most significant among the commentaries is the abstract, quasi-Carlylean discourse on parliamentary democracy where the author makes an ironically helpless gesture of being compelled to accept the existing order in place of an "intellectual" rule (pp. 180-82): as a matter of fact, this commentary gives a positive shape to the author's attitude to politics. Primarily, the discourse is found to be relevant to the narrative purpose, transcending its political ideology, as it stimulates our

interest in Beauchamp as an individual. The question of "intellectual" rule obliquely throws light on Beauchamp's *personal* norm in life, since, for all his Radicalism, he is a Carlylean worshipper of "heroes" and, as the story shows, is romantically impatient with the parliamentary system, wanting to do the work of a thousand years in a few years. The commentary serves a dual purpose. It creates in our minds a sympathy for Beauchamp's *spirit* (underlying his politics)—implicitly criticizing the existing state of things. At the same time, it also helps us see his limitations by prescribing (though somewhat ironically) an eventual acceptance of the present system as the practical way to follow (p. 182). In this double attitude the commentary resembles the manner in which wise Tories in the novel like Seymour Austin and Stukely Culbrett point out the limitations of "Shrapnelism" and "Beauchampism", while agreeing with them in principle (e.g., pp. 415-16). Thus the commentary becomes an analogous representation of the correct perspective to Beauchamp's noble but unpractical idealism.

The commentaries on the conduct of characters, sometimes verging on "psychological analysis," and sometimes "philosophizing" on their behaviour, are the more important kind of Meredith's evaluative commentaries. If we mechanically consider Meredith as a man of his age, these commentaries could be classified with the didactic oratory of the eminent Victorians. Doubtless, these won admiration for him in his own time as wise philosophisations as they have won disapproval from some modern critics as philosophical interferences. Both ancient praise and modern criticism, however, are immaterial. What matters is that these generalizations carry on the business of the particular novels in which they appear ; as I intend to show in my instances, they do this by illuminating special truths about the characters and the action, which could not be communicated in any other manner.

I shall select my examples chiefly from *The Egoist*, the novel which more than any other exposes characters in terms of their mental states. Let us take at first the commentary after the narration of Clara's recent experience of Willoughby's self-aggrandizement :

Certain is the vengeance of the young upon monotony ;  
nothing more certain. They do not scheme it, but sameness is a  
poison to their systems ; and vengeance is their heartier breathing,  
their stretch of the limbs, run in the fields : nature avenges them.  
(p. 126)

This is quite a "wise" run of statements, and we do not seek to contest the idea that "youth" has an urge for vengeance against monotony. But our chief response is not meant here to be the acceptance of an instructive

thesis on young people. What is important is that these lines help us understand the entire psychological drama of Clara *vis-à-vis* that of Willoughby. These lines apparently suggest that since Clara is suffering under the monotony of Willoughby's egoistic talk, she, being young, will take revenge on him. Actually, however, she is not *planning* anything as crude as that. As we see later on, her rejection of Willoughby is not due to any particular, external happening (the Crossjay-escapade of ch. XL only helps bring about the inevitable end); the process of rejection started long ago. That happened in ch. VII when Clara, after coming to Patterne Hall, was denied a holiday before marriage, and felt an inexplicable revulsion for Willoughby (pp. 63-5). For, in return for her expectations of comradeship, "a living and frank exchange of the best in both," she gets the chilling reward of "the mystery of the inefficient tallow-light in those caverns of the complacent talking man" (p. 65). This clash of personalities lies at the root of the comedy of *The Egoist*. Clara, no hero-worshipper like Laetitia, wants comradeship, a two-sided business; Willoughby the inveterate egoist who needs must devour the soul of his lover, can never give it to her; Clara feels this from the beginning—but is not able to explain it. The monotony repelling youth in the present commentary is not, therefore, meant to apply to *all* youth. It is an illumination of the hidden, half-conscious motivation in the mind of the *particular* young person, Clara, placed in a *particular* situation, in whom we are interested; thereby the commentary helps us understand how this will inevitably lead her to take "vengeance," that is, openly reject Willoughby. Thus, instead of driving from the particular to the general, which is the "philosophical" process, Meredith makes the generalization explain the specific.

Let us take the long commentary on Willoughby's egoism in chapter XI of the same novel, when Clara goes away after another experience of his discourse about himself. In order to fully understand the commentary, its context needs to be first explained. We have our experience of Willoughby's egoism in this chapter mostly from Clara's point of view, and at the end of her present interview with Willoughby, she finds from his gestures and words that he so much relies on "her excess of love" that he expects her to worship him "without any estimation of qualities" and so keeps on talking about himself (pp. 128-9). Here Clara approaches very much near the truth about Willoughby, but not the whole truth. Young and inexperienced, she forms a blurred vision of the man, but cannot apprehend that a subtle sensuality governs his attitude to women. The commentary completes this picture of Willoughby—as I shall now show—and also suggests the limitation of her vision. After repeating what Clara has already found out (this way a link is maintained between

the omniscient view and the earlier point of view of Clara), and telling us of Willoughby's egoistic view of women (pp. 129-30), the important part of the commentary runs as follows :

The love-season is the carnival of egoism, and it brings the touchstone to our natures. Applied to Sir Willoughby, as to thousands of males, the touchstone found him requiring to be dealt with by his betrothed as an original savage. She was required to play incessantly on the first reclaiming chord which led our ancestral satyr to the measures of the dance ..To keep him in awe and hold him enchained, there are things she must never do, dare never say, must not think. She must be cloistral...Whether they [women] see that it [men's desire for "purity" in women] has its foundation in the sensual, and distinguish the ultrarefined but lineally great-grand son of the Hoof in this vast and dainty exacting appetite is uncertain...It is the palpable and material of them still which they are tempted to flourish, wherewith to invite and allay pursuit : a condition under which the spiritual ...languishes. The capaciously strong in soul among women will ultimately detect an infinite grossness in the demand for purity infinite, spotless bloom. Earlier or later they see they have been victims of the singular Egoist, have worn a mask of ignorance to be named innocent, . . . suffered themselves to be dragged ages back in playing npon the fleshly innocence of happy accident to gratify his jealous greed of possession ..(pp. 130-31)

The method of the commentary, it may be noticed, generalizes Willoughby and Clara into something like Everyman and Everywoman. This generalization, however, is only a way of coming back to them individually, especially to Willoughby. This is an interesting exposition of the war of sexes, with some very strong words on the facts of life thrown in under a deceptive appearance of abstractions (e. g., "palpable and material..... tempted to flourish"). It means that women are expected to be coquettes under the guise of "purity"—and that they should comply in this—to serve the refined sensualism of men. Their greed for the possession of their mates is whetted by such "purity" and it serves the purpose of devouring male egoism. This is corroborated by the immediately following narration of an earlier episode where Willoughby, wanting to make love to Clara, was refused by her (p. 132) ; we are told that he even rejoiced at what he thought was the "purity" of the refusal, without having the least idea that it was actually out of a feeling of repulsion toward him that she had refused (*ibid.*) Thus the commentary gives us a refreshed image of Willoughby's mind through the generalised picture of egoism. It makes us



understand that the psychological basis of his egoism is a sensual, possessive greed sharpened by an expectation to be worshipped by the purest appearance of femininity—in short a desire for “fleshly innocence”.

Such generalizations are sometimes also meant to set the necessary perspective for correcting a plausible but wrong judgment of a particular character. I say “plausible”, because Meredith sometimes takes pains to show the other side of the case. This is illustrated in my third instance, taken from *Diana*. It is a commentary on Diana on the eve of her fateful meeting with Dacier, which leads to their frustrated love-affair. After telling us that Diana’s mind is athirst for freedom “to breathe, gaze, climb, grow with the grasses, fly with the clouds, to muse, to sing, to be an unclaimed self.....”, the author comments :

Bear in mind her beauty, her charm of tongue, her present state of white simplicity in fervour : was there ever so perilous a woman for the most guarded and clearest-eyed of young men to meet at early morn upon a mountain side ? (p. 173)

Taken merely as a generalized view, this commentary should mean that guarded and clear-eyed young men would lose all their defence and start an affair with beautiful, well-spoken, and freedom-loving women, and that is why Dacier is on the verge of starting an affair with Diana. But such a meaning is not warranted by the narrative. For example, even in a congenial atmosphere, Diana does not become “perilous” in this manner to the guarded and “clear-eyed” Redworth although he nourishes a passion for her (ch. IX). Instead of being the explanation of a universal truth, the statement is actually an illumination of Diana’s individual conduct in the present circumstance. Thus it acts as a corrective to a possible misunderstanding that Diana is emotionally involved with Dacier in the immediately succeeding events in the next chapter—the sort of misunderstanding that Dacier himself, in his sentimental mood, has of her “white simplicity” (e.g. pp. 187-88). The commentary thus also indicates how Diana’s heedless beauty and simplicity unwittingly exercises a magnetic pull over Dacier—a process which takes a concrete shape in the next chapter. This provides the key to her dilemmas with Dacier and with men in general, seen throughout the novel. Moreover, the commentary gives us an ironical view of the “clearest-eyed” Dacier who is found in the next chapter to be a prey to sensualism and sentimentalism which is the actual reason for Diana’s assuming a “perilous” aspect for him.

The kinds of commentary that we have seen above point to a common conclusion.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, they are necessary clues to significances implicit in the novels : while the author is “vocal” in them with his external, explicatory point of view, they function, just like situations and

characters as parts of the total narrative construction. They are not candid, undisciplined self-revelations but are verbal devices that largely render significances and meanings in an oblique manner. The functions of some other types of commentary have had to be left out for reasons of space, but they only establish the truth thus indicated by the major and recurrent types.

#### IV

Along with the other features of omniscience looked at in this essay, this functional character of the commentaries thus indicates the general truth about the author's voice in Meredith. For one thing, it signifies that in the hands of a novelist who cares about his art, the "voice" is capable of becoming a method. What is more important is the way in which Meredith handles it. He does not set about it as a matter of uninhibited right, and adjusts and modulates it according to his artistic purpose. This is where he differs from his "explicit" forerunners and peers from Fielding to George Eliot (although I do not for a moment intend to say that their "uninhibited right" is necessarily a fault). The Meredithian "voice" is not prescriptive, and is not to be equated with the booming public voice of Box Hill. Existing in its own right, it is not, however, imposed upon the narratives but fundamentally serves them. An artistic tension thus runs through it, which illustrates the interesting truth: while he follows an old convention, Meredith makes an original use of it that shows an aesthetic conscience and deliberateness not usually discovered in Victorian novelists.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Wayne Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1961, 4th impression, 1963; pp. 15-20) and W. J. Harvey (*The Art of George Eliot*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1961, pp. 68-9) are to be particularly mentioned.
2. This is what Norman Friedman, a major exponent of the Lubbock-Beach mode of criticism, ascribes to omniscience, in his "Point of view in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept" *PMLA*, LXX (1955), p. 1169.
3. *Sandra Belloni*, in Memorial Edition (27 vols.) London, Constable, 1909-11, p. 484. All my subsequent referemes to Merediths texts are to this edition.
4. For some of his similar views on the novel, see e.g., *The Egoist*, pp. 132-33, *Celt and Saxon*, pp. 183, 185; *One of Our Conquerors*, p. 374; *The Westminster Review*, LXVII (April 1857) p. 611, LXVII (July 1857), p. 310, and LXVIII (October 1857) p. 601.

5. See e.g., J. W. Beach *The Twentieth Century Novel*, New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1932, p. 30 ; A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, London, Peter Nevill, 1952, pp. 112, 222. A brief defence of Meredith's practice is seen in Phyllis Bartlett, "The Novels of George Meredith," *A Review of English Literature*, III (1962), pp. 38-43-

6. However, even this device need not be taken as so "old-fashioned," See e.g., Joyce's *Ulysses*, New York, the Modern Library, 1934 pp. 342-43.

7. Meredith ridicules this through the Philosopher's comment in *Sandra Belloni*: "still up to this day, the fixture of a nose upon the puppet-hero's frontispiece has not been attempted" (p. 111).

8. The importance can be gauged from the fact that the scenic action occupies 508 pages of the total 629 in the novel.

9. The brief panoramic ending of *the Egoist* in ten and a half lines (pp. 625-626) is hardly noticeable and without much importance.

10. Save a few, stray, brief summaries (as in p. 51 of *Lord Ormont*).

11. *Thackeray the Novelist*, London, Methuen, University Paperbacks, 1963 (first published 1954), p. 84.

12. See David Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, 1st pr. 1960, 1st phoenix ed., 1965, pp. 1-4.

13. *Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist*, *One of our conquerors*, *Lord Ormont* and *The Amazing Marriage* especially illustrate this.

14. See, e.g., *Evan Harrington*, pp. 170, 173, 176, and *Rhoda Fleming*, pp. 45-6, 69, 101, 107, 220-221.

15. There are plenty of such "intrusions" in *Sandra Belloni*, too ; but they are all dramatized and not straight forwardly authorial.

16. I borrow the term from Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 205.

17. E.g., moralistic stories, sentimental romances, sensational novels, naturalistic fiction, and social satire.

18. These appear to be the special occasion for Beach's mistaken classification of Meredith as a philosophical, thesis-propounding novelist ; see, e.g., *The Twentieth Century Novel*, p. 38, also *The Method of Henry James*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1918, p. 24.

19. *Op. cit.*, pp. 42-4.

20. See M. E. Speare, *The Political Novel*, New York, O. U. P., 1924, pp. 237-38.

21. Some other representative instances of the functions of various types of commentary are as follows: *Richard Feverel* p. 10 (different from the one cited above), pp. 233-34, *Vittoria*, p. 80, 84-6, 460-61 ; *Beauchamp's Career*, p. 6, pp. 36-7, 38-9, 39-40, 40-1, 92-4, 103-4, 317-18, 552, 616, 624 ; *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper*, (in Memorial edition, XXI), pp. 120, 130 ; *The Egoist*, pp. 6, 237-8, 240-41, 245, 265-96 ; *Diana*, pp. 54, 58, 74, 189, 399-400, 440-41, 448 ; *One of Our Conquerors*, pp. 10, 10-1. *The Amazing Marriage*, the last novel, provides some very characteristic instances ; but these, as in *Sandra Belloni*, are better understood in the light of the dramatizing technique of the novel.

## INTERPLAY BETWEEN IMAGE AND ACTION IN THE AENEID

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S. K. DAS

IT is the common experience of teachers dealing with Roman literature that the *Aeneid* presents to the average reader difficulties which could have been avoided if he could study the original Latin version. This is to a large degree because of the inadequacy of all translations. Not that the translators lack ability. Indeed, some of them are distinguished poets. But Vergil placed insuperable problems in the way of translators. His style, an essential aspect of the total epic, has not been and cannot be adequately translated.<sup>1</sup> Vergil did not produce a poem which would be a good story in itself. Anyone can enjoy the *Odyssey*, for example, whether presented in prose or verse ; its power does not depend so heavily on the techniques of oral composition. When Vergil wrote the *Aeneid*, the spirit of the times and his own special talents demanded a thoroughly conscious exploitation of every relevant stylistic technique. The art of the *Aeneid* involves many technical skills, which Vergil, starting from the experiments of his predecessors, developed to near perfection. Although it is possible and important to analyse the broad themes and imagery of the epic, we inevitably miss the full power of his poem in translation ; we miss the very implications of a highly conscious style.

The effectiveness of Vergil's poetry is to be sought in the power that individual metaphors and patterns of verbal similarity can infuse into a given book or even into the total epic. Therefore, the search for and analysis of his poetic design should begin with an examination of those subtle variations and repetitions of metaphor and image by which action and structure are unified. To make this point as concretely as possible, it seems necessary to select a part of the Latin original. I offer here an interpretation of the first 550 lines of the second book of the *Aeneid* as an entity held together by special verbal designs. My purpose is not to deal with technical matters such as versification and metre ; rather my primary intention is to examine the poet's characteristic method of composition.

In the beginning of the second book Aeneas begins his tragic story

of the sack of Troy and as the narrative proceeds we are no longer in Carthage but confronting the enormous bulk of the wooden horse. Laocoon comes hastening furiously down from the citadel with a large number of followers to expose the fraud. But another figure suddenly appears: he is Sinon, the very personification of Greek treachery. He is the object of as much doubt to the Trojans as the horse, and equally false. His name itself with its resemblance to *sinus*, *sinuo* helps to bring out the suggestion of treachery. His lying deceives the Trojans and they believe that the horse brings the blessing of the gods upon the city. The English word *sinuous* with its suggestion of serpentine tortuosity communicates to us the sinister aspect of the name of Sinon. Sinon says:

*vincula rupi  
limosoque lacu per noctem obscurus in ulva  
delitui*

(I burst my bonds and lurked all night in a muddy  
swamp hidden in the sedge)

*Delitui* is derived from *delitescere* which is used with peculiar appropriateness to the serpent. Vergil uses the same word (*vipera delituit*) to describe the viper in *Georgics* (III.416-17). Sinon whose name itself suggests the slippery qualities of the snake is the voice of the horse. The wiles of the Greeks which Laocoon had stressed are absorbed by Sinon. One suspects that the Pelasgian guile (*arte Pelasga*, 152 and *artisque Pelasgae*, 106) by means of which Sinon gains the trust of the Trojans, is closely associated with the *divina Palladis ars*, the divine and clever craft of the goddess responsible for the making of the horse. The people crowd round the fettered Sinon just as they had approached Minerva's monster, the wooden horse. The relaxing of Sinon's bonds, ironically by the doomed Priam himself, is paralleled first in the opening of the gates of Troy. And Sinon looks around (*circumspexit*, 68), almost mimicking Laocoon's prediction that the horse would soon look down upon the very houses (*inspectura domos*, 47). Sinon's groan echoes in a sense the cry of the wounded horse and the resistance of the Trojans breaks down. The fortunes of Sinon are related closely to those of the horse and to the fate of Laocoon. And as Sinon rises Laocoon falls. The doom of Laocoon forshadowes the doom of Troy. The drama of the first segment of the book may be briefly summarized as the replacement of Laocoon by Sinon and his portentous instruments, the snakes and the horse. They constitute the symbolic triumph of Greece over Troy preceding the actual ruin.

The snakes from Tenedos where the Greeks lie in wait come and devour Laocoon and his sons ostensibly because he dared to challenge the wooden horse. Then the snakes flee to the citadel, whence Laocoon had first rushed to give his unheeded warning ; later the snakes slowly move towards the shrine of Athena, who, as we know from Aeneas's opening description, was the protectress of the horse. The horse, initially the object of skepticism and distrust, now makes triumphant entry into the city, and Vergil completes the circular course of the plot in terms of natural description, for the horse releases its deadly burden as sleep grips the Trojans.

Such a summary does not elucidate the magnificent interplay between images and action. The snakes and the horse become central images in the dialogue between Laocoon and Sinon, one seeking to expose, and the other to deceive and destroy. To clarify the design we should examine with care the pattern of imagery in this part of the narrative. Let us turn, as Aeneas does, to the wooden horse.

*Fracti bello fatisque repulsi  
ducteres Danaum, tot iam labentibus annis,  
instar montis equum divina Palladis arte  
aedificant sectaque intexunt abiete costas ;  
votum pro reditu simulant ; ea fama vagatur.  
huc delecta virum sortiti corpora furtim  
includunt caeco lateri penitusque cavernas  
ingentis utrumque armato milite complent. (Il.13-20)*

(Broken by war and driven back by fates the Danaan chiefs after the passage of so many years build with Pallas's divine art a horse of mountainous size weaving its ribs with planks of fir. They pretend it as an offering ; this rumour goes abroad. Here into its dark side they secretly hide a select body of men and fill up its huge cavern and deep belly with armed soldiery.)

Three distinct metaphors are employed here and the poet refers to them with slight variations in subsequent lines. First, the horse is an animal and possesses ribs, side and belly. Moreover, though wooden, it deceives paradoxically and is actually very much alive.<sup>2</sup> Parallels between a ship's hold and the belly of the horse have been noticed by M. C. J. Putnam.<sup>3</sup> Vergil stresses the similarity between the deadly cargo in a ship's hold and the soldiers concealed within the wooden horse. Finally, the horse is as huge as a mountain within whose dark side and cavernous interior

soldiers can be hidden with stealth. The size has been emphasized so that the wooden horse can look down upon the walls of Troy and upon the very houses of the people (*inspectura domos ventura que desuper urbi* : about to gaze into our homes and plunge upon the city from above 1.47). For reasons of its height and bulk and for the threat it poses it is *minans*, threatening (1.240).

The 'life' of the horse is perhaps the most striking ambiguity evident throughout the description. The idea of the horse as a womb is traditional, as is that of pregnancy, and is Roman as well as Greek.<sup>4</sup> The word *ingens* specially in conjunction with the word *cavernas* also has connotations of pregnancy. Vergil accentuates also the hollowness of the horse (*cavas uteri et temptare latebras* : feel the hollow hiding places of the womb, 1.38) to suggest the same ambiguity of beast, ship and mountain. In line 45 *inclusi* echoes *includunt* in line 19. Laocoon's speech (11.42-49) reveals the fraud and the uses of *latabrae* and *insidiae* are found in lines 36, 38, 55, 65 and 195.

In the hope of proving his point and exposing the fraud Laocoon plunges his spear into the body of the horse (11, 50-53).

*sic fatus validis ingentem viribus hastam  
in latus inque feri curvam compagnibus alvum  
contorsit. stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso  
insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae.*

(So saying he hurled his spear with mighty force at the beast's side and the curved frame of the belly. There it halted quivering, and as the womb was struck the hollow cave rumbled and gave forth a groan.)

Once again the same metaphors appear ; the beast has flanks and womb ; like a cargo vessel it possesses sides, a belly and a hold. At the same time the word *latus* and *cavae cavernae* recall the deep mountainous hollow mentioned in line 19.

After the death of Laocoon the way is open for the beast's grand entry into Troy (11.234-40) :

*dividimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis.  
accingunt omnes operi pedibusque rotarum  
subiciunt lapsus et stuppea vincula collo  
intendunt. scandit fatalls machina muris,  
feta armis. pueri circum innuptaeque puellae  
sacra canunt funemque manu contingere gaudent ;  
illa subit mediaeque minans inlabitur urbi.*

(We part the walls and lay open the city's battlements. All gird themselves for the task and put gliding wheels under the horse's feet and stretch hempen bands about its neck. The fateful engine climbs the walls, pregnant with arms. Around it boys and unwedded maidens chant holy songs and delight in touching the rope with their hands. It moves on and glides menacingly into the midst of the city.)

The horse glides into the city pregnant not as an ordinary animal but with the potentiality of armed might. Then under cover of darkness Sinon breaches its swollen belly to let forth the hidden Greeks. The city gates and the *latabrae* within the horse's belly have been opened. The horse glides on slippery wheels (*rotarum lapsus*) which recall the sinuous movement of the snakes. The notion of gliding and floating which the phrase suggests passes into the verb (*inlabitur* (1.240). The parallel between the huge lumbering beast and a ship is once again stressed. *Funis* could be considered a cable by which a ship is hauled or moored as well as the bridle of a horse and this has been observed already by R.G. Austin.<sup>5</sup> The verb *reddo* which the poet uses in line 260 can also be used to describe the unloading of a ship's cargo.

At this stage it would be worthwhile to examine how Vergil seems to have adopted a similar interaction of image and action to describe another moment whose intensity depends on violence either suppressed or released. It is the sea storm raised by Aeolus (in Book I) at the behest of Juno and there too, Vergil seizes upon the metaphor of horses to extend his meaning beyond the literal description. The winds roar like animals (*fremunt*, I, 56.) and Aeolus soothes their troubled spirits as a charioteer controls his horses. He curbs their strength (*premit* I, 54) and bridles them (*frenat*, I, 54). And Juno commands: (*incute vim ventis submersasque obrue puppis*, strike force into the winds and overwhelm the sinking ships, I. 69). She adds the notion of whipping to the simile. The winds seem to acquire unobtrusively the characteristics of human beings, and at the same time retain their potentiality for destruction. Vergil also compares them to a seditious mob (Book I, 11. 148-54). Vergil describes the habitat of the winds; it is a deep cavern (*vasto antro*, I, 52). Its hollowness is further implied by the phrase *feta furentibus Austris* (I, 51.) The cavern teems with furious blasts and the reader is prepared for the birth of violence very similar to the violence unleashed in the sack of Troy. Aeolus now drives his spear against the mountainside :



*Haec ubi dicta, cavum conversa cuspide montem  
impulit in latus ; ac venti, velut agmine facto,  
qua data porta, ruunt et terras turbine perflant.*

(I. 81-83)

(So he spoke and turning his spear smote the  
hollow mountain on its side ; and lo ! the winds  
as if in armed array rush forth where passage is  
given and blow in storm blasts across the world.)

Laocoon similarly had plunged his spear against the wooden horse ; and the parallels reveal a pattern Vergil's mind tended to follow when describing potential violence. And when the birth of violence finally occurs, the poet does not fail to infuse the power of the first passage into the second. The winds are metaphorically treated as steeds and the brood of the wooden horse draws, to itself the image of winds. When Aeneas realizes that ruin has befallen Troy, Vergil enlivens the scene with a simile comparing the destruction to a flame aided by raging winds and the phrase *furentibus Austris* occurs both in Book I, 51 and Book II, 304.

Besides, at the very moment when the twin sons of Atreus are first shown going about their work in Troy's flaming hell, Vergil adds another simile which equates the violence of the winds with the companion horses. (II. 414-19). If the snakes seem to symbolize the surreptitious nature of the Greeks, the horse may be said to typify their fury. The horse also possesses the quality of stealth as the poet draws for effect upon the language which accompanies Sinon and the snakes. We observe how symbol and reality become one in the virtually human purpose behind their deadly intent. In line 24 (*huc se propecti deserto in litore condunt* : hither they sail and bury themselves on the barren shore) we are told what the Greeks are doing there. The verb *condo* has a distinctly sinister character and the same word reappears at line 401 (*nota conduntur in alvo*) where the Greeks are forced to bury themselves in the horse's belly. Thus the horse also is invested with the idea of deception, and the reader has not forgotten that the snakes and the Greeks all come from Tenedos.

The snakes lurking in Tenedos take their initial revenge on the attempted revealer of the horse's deception. Laocoon who had offered a bull to Neptune is now himself the sacrificial victim. His offering in this prophetic twilight is soon expanded into the destruction of all Troy. There seems to be a clear link between the serpents, the

horse and forces on Tenedos. The word *lapsus* (I. 236 l. 225) describes the gliding motion of the snakes as it does the slippery wheels under the horse. Sinon's own characteristic too colours the words. One of the snakes wriggles its huge back (*sinuatque immensa volumine terga*. II. 208). When the Trojans see how the serpents devour Laocoon and his sons, they are frightened and the poet describes the state of their mind with a telling phrase—*insinuat pavor*, 229. Even clearer is the imagery the poet uses a few lines later to introduce Aeneas's dream of Hector.

*Tempus erat, quo prima quies mortalibus aegris  
incipit et dono divum gratissima serpit. (II. 268-69).*

(It was the hour when divinely given rest first comes  
to poor human creatures and creeps over them deliciously.)

We feel that as sleep creeps over them, it brings death in its wake. There is a touch of foreboding in the sadness of *mortalibus aegris*. Bernard M. W. Knox shows how Catullus, Ovid, and Statius have made use of the insidious nature of sleep, and how Vergil was exploiting a stock expression.<sup>6</sup>

However, the potentiality of the snake imagery is not dropped and it occurs in the episode of Androgeos introduced with vivid irony by the same phrase used to bring Laocoon to our attention: *magna comitante caterva* (lines 40 and 370). Androgeos sensed that he had slipped into the midst of the enemy: and the snake imagery makes its appearance—*sensit medios delapsus in hostis*. A little later we are reminded of another serpent, Pyrrhus who is violence personified. The time for concealment is past, so Pyrrhus's violence is open like that of the serpents that devour Laocoon and his sons. Pyrrhus kills the son before the face of the father, and the father at the altar—*natum ante ora patris, patrem qui obtruncat ad aras* (663). The parallel is stressed at the very beginning of the magnificent passage (471-75) where Pyrrhus is compared to a snake

*qualis ubi in lucem coluber mala gramina pastus  
(as when into the light comes a snake fed on poisonous  
herbs)*

In the following lines the latent violence of the snake imagery bursts forth in all its brilliance. When Pyrrhus grabs Priam by the hair and pulls him toward the altar, trembling and slipping in the blood of his son, the poet invites the reader to recall the death of Laocoon. For as he offered sacrifice the twin snakes grasped in deadly embrace (*implicat* appears both in lines 215 and 552) first his sons and then himself. If

the sacrifice of Laocoon is no more than a symbolic precursor of the debacle to come, then the death of Priam at the altar announces its conclusion. And his collapse at the hands of Pyrrhus, the serpent rejuvenated, seems to Aeneas to signify Troy's final collapse.

The foregoing analysis is an attempt to examine some of the rich complexities of Vergil's images. To support it by an appeal to Vergil's intentions would be barren and perhaps irrelevant. It has been suggested<sup>7</sup> that Vergil's metaphors are clearly modelled on those of Apollonius and Homer, but unlike theirs are integrated with the whole poem by virtue of their association with *leitmotifs* that recur at pivotal moments of action. Kenneth Quinn says<sup>8</sup> that we expect of an epic a loose-knit style and a leisurely tempo. But the tempo of the *Aeneid* seems to have an urgent economy that makes us feel that every word counts and every detail forms part of a cohering density. In this imaginative integrity lies his greatest achievement.

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# MARGARET CHATTERJEE'S POETRY AND HUMANISM

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K. LAHIRI

## I. *Recognition ;*

THAT Margaret Chatterjee is widely recognised at home and abroad as a front-rank figure among contemporary Indo-Anglian poets is evident from the abundant publication of her poems in Indian and foreign magazines besides quite a number of good collections of her verse.

## II. *Range :*

Her poetry covers a wide range of subjects, a large variety of experiences, and the whole gamut of human emotions and feelings. The thematic scope of her verse extends from the trivial to the grand, from the low to the high, from the familiar and concrete to the remote and symbolic. And her imagination moves freely on space, time and personalities : from Troy to Noakhali, from Rome to Simla, from Homer and Ovid to George Sand and Bharatchandra (*Towards the Sun*).

From paying high tributes to a departed celebrity—

“Even in these non-epic times,  
Across thousands of miles  
Continent salutes continent  
As we take the last dust  
Of your feet.”

(*To Pablo Neruda*)

—She comes to write sympathetically on a trifle. Who could dream of poetry being made of shoes, each variety being invested with a distinct individuality ?—

“Tenantless shoes speak.  
Rubber-fall whisper, light pad chatter,  
Heavy boot stair-shaking shout.  
Calling-for-the-cobbler shoes,

Been-in-the-fray shoes.  
 —Where on earth's the other one ?  
 Shot right behind the trunk  
 By a zealous broom.  
 .....empty shoes  
 Wrinkled, stretched,  
 —a neat row beneath the rack."

(Shoes)

What a glorious procession !

### III. *Description : Nature and Man—*

True to the tradition of the best poetry in the East as well as in the West, Margaret Chatterjee's verse always shows a fresh response to the beauty of Nature. The natural setting of her poetry stretches quite easy over plains and hills, fields and woods, rivers and seas. Land and sea are run together in the glorions vision of a happy dawning for the world's unredeemed struggling masses :

"When the gun-fire is no more  
 And the pruning hooks  
 Come into their own,  
 The long coast-line  
 Edged with the foam  
 Of plunging seas  
 Will stretch itself  
 In ecstasy  
 And the land yearn  
 For seed."

—To Pablo Neruda

Indian flora and fauna are generously distributed through her scenes : from *neem* and *tal*, *tamarind* and *sandalwood* to the *mynah* and the tortoise, the cricket and the cat. Even in misty autumn she can think, Shelley-like, of the vernal richness of the earth's beauty and the undying fire of life pulsating within :

"You too go the same way  
 The same season of the year,  
 In an autumn which should have been  
 The richest of them all.  
 Your closed eyes know  
 The skin of the earth

Is still beautiful  
And inside the belly of it  
The purest fire."

—*Ibid*

A passing moment of life is caught casually and preserved in sharp relief :

"...Squadrons of parrots  
Streaking the sky,  
And only the feet of mynah and hoopoe,  
To brush the dew away ;  
.....  
.....a ginger cat  
And the peregrinations  
Of an important-looking dog."

—*Daylight*

She has occasionally a bestiary, a little verse on a beast, with a lesson for man. The poet's cat combines alertness with relaxation :

"Limpness seeps  
Into every paw.  
His whiskers would drop,  
If they could. He does know  
How to relax."

—*The Cat*

And the tortoise is the symbol of the complex life-process of progression and rest at the same time ; it comes so easy to the animal and is so difficult for man :

"I must not only move  
But dwell.  
Not only dwell  
But move."

—*Tortoise*

Her descriptive power is invoked with equal intensity and zest in delineation of human features, beautiful or ugly, soft or harsh. Here are two typical specimens from the two extremities of life at birth and after death, of the resplendent baby and of the burning corpse.

The description of the lovely delicate infant runs into tender, intimate detail, undoubtedly drawn from the wondering, loving observation of a freshborn mother :

“So lovely this whorl of ear,  
 This silken pelt of skin,  
 Young-scented,  
 .....  
 The palms of your hand,  
 The soles of your feet.”

—*Incarnation*

The counter-picture is that of the burning body in the funeral pyre, drawn to eerie details, yet soaked in a passionate feeling of love for life itself. Fire, that consumes the mortal remains, is conceived as a lover, the last and the best. The beloved in passion courts the lover :

“Here is my last lover,  
 The most persistent.  
 .....  
 ...the last leap  
 Of flame to flame,  
 Complete, reciprocal.  
 Let me feed the fire  
 With my body.  
 Let the flames  
 Lick me with their tongue,  
 My limbs molten,  
 My head burst  
 In a thousand  
 Fiery stars.”

—*Agni*

#### IV. *Sense Perception :*

The fusion of external Nature and human life reaches a new height through rare keenness of sense perception. Awareness of the change of seasons—winter, spring, summer—comes to her not primarily by exposure to the weather, nor conventionally through observation of the landscape and the skyline, but also more strongly through contact with the city itself and indoor life :

“I know when it is winter  
 From the coldness of your cheeks.  
 Spring powders red the trees  
 And oil melts in the shade.  
 I know when it is Summer

For the pavement burns my feet,  
And now I know the rains have come  
From the salt taste of your skin."

The sensitiveness grows keener and the perception becomes subtler, passing from the observation of vernal colour on trees, through the burning of the naked feet on heated pavements, to the cool touch of the lover's cheeks in a wintry night and finally to the salty taste of the perspiring skin in the fevered stuffiness of tropical August.

In the feast of her poetic imagery all the senses are, as in Keats, catered severally, often simultaneously. Here is a cluster :

".....flared flamboyant  
Hibiscus in a dark garden."  
".....a patch sky  
Jacaranda blue."  
"the lapping of leaves."  
"the scent of grass"

—August 15

—eye, ear, nose, all the senses are kept open and alert.

In rare instances the appeals of the different senses are interchanged or intermingled. Her poetic mind is taken by the beauty of rhythm through every sense: rhythm in sound and rhythm in shape being exchangeable and interpenetrating:

"For loving the shape of sound,  
The *sound of shape*  
—This salutation.  
... ..  
My involutions are intricate  
As the heart of the flower ;  
This is the *curve of the wave's roar*.  
... ..  
The *ripple of ebony*  
Is a high note held,  
Hands ready to pluck the strings  
And every pause is for wind to blow.  
.....I not only *look*  
But *listen*,  
Possessed as I am  
With *sculpted sound*.



The italics pin-point the interfusion of multi-faceted sense perceptions.

Dazed as she is by the riddle of the soul in her being, she still confesses the crowning paradox of remembering every minute feature of the splendour of the spectacle that is life. The individual sense impressions of body and form, even the most trivial and elusive ones, are not obscured in the vision of the whole :

"I remember not only the central rip  
Of the lime leaf, but the downy fringe,  
Limp in the spring sun ;  
Youth in the eyes of the aged  
Fused with the bent form and the furrowed face ;  
The proud stance of the horse  
And the sheen of his pelt ;  
The taut line of the leopard's body  
And the fury of his breath ;  
And who shall say which is essential  
And which is peripheral ?  
I have loved what I have seen and touched".

—*The Splendour of the Spectacle*

No experience, however trite or exotic, is lost en route as life is rushed through the wilderness that is modern existence, but every impression received from life is meticulously gathered up and absorbed into her poetry.

Her keen life-awareness projects itself beautifully in the neat little verse, *On Forgetting*. The best illustration of forgetting, or rather of nature fighting against the natural tendency to forget, is the search by the tongue for the lost tooth in the alveolar cavity :

"Because meaning is inconstant,  
I search the gaps with my tongue,  
... ..  
Searching where the tooth was  
And no longer is."

—*On Forgetting*

#### V. Imagery :

Images in Margaret Chatterjee's poetry are always fresh and naive, sometimes unexpected. Every little poem of hers tells a story, a full

story of the eternal life-process. Oftener than not it is an episode of youth, rejuvenation, and always, in imagery, raw, warm, blood-sod.

On recovering from an illness the convalescent poet gets a new life and finds a fresh image to clothe it :

"Familiar with cock-crow situations,  
I awoke on a brand-new day,  
Sailing in seas so linen smooth  
That not a wrinkle  
Marred their tranquillity.  
The pillows snowy peaks  
On which a startled gull  
Making his way homewards  
Might alight."

—*On Recovering from an Illness*

—a glorious sketch in a perfect frame, fresh and fitting. Often an image tends to enlarge on an epic scale with an elaborate oriental setting. The monotonous chirping of the cricket on a rural evening sounds to the poet as the dragged playing on an Indian musical instrument :

".....the cricket  
On the neem tree,  
Steadily working at his theme  
Titillating teental tempo  
Punctillious pointillist  
Pause accelerating,  
Usted that he is.  
Playing his shehnai."

—*Cricket*

The comparison is not laboured but naturally suggested.

Or, the image is tenuous and rarefied :

"When I thought  
You made a sudden move  
Towards me  
... ..  
I saw the footprints of birds on the snow  
Or the foot-prints  
Of birds in the sky."

—*Mood*

Light bird-step on drifting snow or in the intangible sky is a suitable

image for the illusory nature of a passing mood. The figure, on the poet's admission, was suggested by Gaudapada.

Associative images come easy to her mind. White puffed rice blown on the floor brings to the poet's imagination all sorts of unexpected associations through similarities of whiteness, granular shape, and scattered position—northern snow flakes, sand in the desert, and, queerest of all, cosmetic body powder : each a complete image by itself :

“New snow  
 Veers vertical  
 In north-wind country ;  
 Top layer Sahara sand  
 Ripples horizontal.  
 Tropic for miles ;  
 Fan-whipped  
 Jasmine powder  
 Blows along your body's  
 Strange geography ;  
 I listen to puffed rice  
 Small impish hands scattered  
 Big white snow  
 Ablow in a summer draught  
 Making small scudding noises  
 On the mosaic floor.”

—*Puffed Rice*

No less striking is the image, drawn from modern life, of a cuddled dog compared to the contorted figure of a chair-passenger in a vestibule train :

“Contorted like a passenger  
 In a vestibule train—  
 No position comforts ;  
 Oh the exquisite agony of it—  
 My dog and his ticks.”

—*Gyp*

—What a comparison for a neat picture !

An arresting analogy compresses the essence of a subtle experience in a simple yet memorable simile. The image of a woman in the pain of child-birth is so aptly used for the poet under divine inspiration to compose :

"So right you were to find  
Evidence of travail  
Writ large in me.  
So full I am  
That waiting is  
The sheerest agony.  
The very earth it seems  
Now groans  
In sympathy.  
What shall be born  
I can have no idea.  
These words  
That batter at the door,  
Long to take flight,  
Exhaust me utterly.  
Reluctant father that you are  
The cause of this  
Strange burgeoning  
In me?"

—*Lyric : four*

Rather bold in her imagination, the poet visualizes the birth of baby Jesus in fond human terms :

"Carried for nine months  
In the heart of darkness,  
Tiny as the children we bear,  
... ..  
Flesh of our flesh,  
Curled as red petals  
In the tight bud of night,  
Leapt now out of chaos  
With a small cry."

—*Incarnation*

#### VI. *Concern for life :*

The alert and subtle lyricism of Margaret Chatterjee's poetry proceeds directly from her fine sensitiveness to and concern for life. There is above all the artist's detached view of life's grand march. Here is a procession of people at a busy centre of urban life :

"Old men in mufflers  
 Tread carefully  
 The slippery streets  
 .....the coalman  
 In his rags.  
 The detinue in chains  
 Being taken to the next thana ;  
 Slogans on the wall.  
 The coolie.....  
 Shoots his spit."

—Near Howrah Station

And so the caravan goes on. Ennui can not mar motion with  
 monotony, for at every point life throws up contrasts. Beside the  
 colourless drabness of the daily round of the toy-violin-seller in the  
 street is juxtaposed the child-buyer's unending curiosity and unwearied  
 experiments on the instrument. The man

"...makes his way,  
 His tune returns in spite of  
 Endless versatility.  
 No day relieves him of  
 Recurrent melody.  
 Time has no stop.  
 Yet time stands still  
 On *khoka's* ten-pice watch,  
 His tiny hand experiments  
 And on his violin  
 He makes one note."

—Violin-seller,

Behind the observer there function a mind which meditates and  
 a heart which feels. The mystery of life presses on the contemplative  
 mind. Standing on the verge of

"...the last horizon  
 Beyond which there is no time,  
 ... ..  
 Beyond which there is no return,  
 ... ..  
 Where I shall know  
 What I have been speaking"—

—The Spring and the Spectacle

the poet looks back. Life appears to her a riddle of body and soul,

"...the impossible question  
That has been my life,  
The task of isolating the dance  
From the dancer,  
The kernel from the fruit,  
The flame from the fire."

—*The Spring and the Spectacle*

But the insolubility of the high problem does not obscure the poet's clarity of vision nor affects her healthy acceptance of life with all its imperfections of pleasure and pain.

The poet contrasts the imperfect and painful life of mortals to the divine incarnation in Jesus Christ in whom there is

"Complete union of form and matter  
Ever within and beyond, now among—  
Incomprehensible."

—*Incarnation*

But

• "to us spirit is unfamiliar.

... ..

For us there is only our physical existence,  
The short-lived height of the body's pleasure  
And the longer agony of the body's pain—  
Our own imperfect incarnation.

... ..

Dwelling as we do on the plateau of the  
incomplete

And the circumstanced,  
Poised between the was and shall be."

—*Ibid.*

The feeling heart of the poet is all warm with sympathy for the poor, and is full of ire, cynical against the rich.

She writes the poetry of squalor and nuisance in the dirtiest railhead in the country. The emphasis is on the human aspect and association, essentially a poet of humanism as she is. It is not objectivism out of a morbid taste for ugliness, but objectivism issuing from an inherent love of humanity and sharp satire on mounting contrasts in modern civilisation.



From her deep concern for human predicament wells out the loud protestation of the true Christian against the high and powerful in society, while the poor and the suffering remain where they are :

"Flying high in a silver bird of steel  
You hear the shrill piping of children's voices  
From the play-ground, the cries of beggars at the gate;  
Yours is the sky, the power and the glory  
—And the kingdom is not yet."

—September 3 (1939, the day World War II broke out)

This is protesting and cursing in the tone of the Hebrew prophets in the very language of the scripture.

The poet realizes the irony of writing verse on Nature's beauty in a war-ravaged land :

"Perhaps this is no time  
To write of trees  
while men lie dead  
In places where  
The one-legged tál  
• Standing in vacant lots  
Is silent witness  
To dark deeds done ;  
... ..  
Where trees blighted by war,  
Mango and jack-fruit,  
Yet survive  
With hope of fruit  
Next year,  
While boy  
Who made a whistle of a mango-stone  
Will fly his kite no more ;  
The wind blows through  
The wintry tamarind at night  
And jackals call."

*The Sandalwood Tree*

In the midst of ruin all round she feels a nostalgic yearning for the glory and rejuvenation of life.

Here is a genuine chip of contemporary poetry with all its zest for life to desperation, with its unbounded longing and pitiless cynicism. It is ust an echo of the pervading poignant protest against the





I attended wedding feasts.  
While you lay  
In a common grave  
I covered reams of paper  
With empty words  
Can you forgive me  
For being alive,  
For breathing air

...                      ...                      ...  
While you are gone ?”

—*Ibid*

Can self-reproach be more pungent ?

Her deep cynicism against the rich, who live on their ivory tower of cosy dreams far from stark reality, splutters out into powerful invectives against sham and hypocrisy of every colour—economic, political, religious

“When rich men make poverty a virtue  
Tell them we died of hunger.  
When people talk of toleration  
Tell them our synagogues were smashed,  
Our temples and churches desecrated.  
When they talk of democracy  
Tell them that some of us died in Spain  
Because we cared too much.  
You world-makers, lovers of towers and mountains,  
Who fashion the time of day with visions,  
Who are not put off with fine phrases—  
We also loved the world and died in exile.  
We have no voice left but yours...”

—*From the Abyss*

Could home truths be told simpler ?

But the poet's spirit does not give way to romantic despondency. She is convinced that the day of reckoning will dawn. Apostrophising to Neruda, who was a champion of the earth's dispossessed, she declares :

“The earth will one day rebel  
Even if the heavens  
Are silent now.  
Go with the thunder  
Of Pacific surf

In your ears.  
 Louder than the sound  
 Of the bullets that penetrate  
 Our human skin.  
 No skin contains the spirit  
 Nor shall the earth's skin  
 Contain the belching fire  
 of destiny.

...                      ...                      ...  
 Your destiny is part  
 Of the relay race of men,  
 Of those whose warm flesh  
 Dies at the cold touch  
 Of steel,  
 Whose children die of swollen bellies,  
 Who are knocked by the police,  
 Sprawling on pavements,  
 Who is on narrow prison beds."

—*To Pablo Neruda*

And she sees the glorious vision of the future :

"One day the human landscape  
 Will be beautiful,  
 The sand no longer  
 Hold the rusty stain of blood.  
 We pledge  
 That it be so."

—*Ibid*

# THE CONCEPT OF TRAGIC KATHARSIS

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JOGESH CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA

IT IS a great paradox in this world that many things which repel us in actual life lose their unpleasantness when they are presented in literature. Drunkards are people we generally want to avoid. But Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* remains one of the most endearing of literary creations. A murderer is a hateful creature in practical life. But do we for that reason treat Macbeth with hatred? Tragedy offers us a paradox of the same nature. We never want that our own lives should be tragic, and yet we enjoy tragedies while reading them and go to witness tragic performances on the stage and the screen. What, we ask ourselves, is the secret of their peculiar attraction for the human mind?

The same question troubled the minds of the ancient Greeks and perhaps the oldest European explanation of the paradox of Tragic pleasure is offered by the concept of Katharsis which goes as far back as Aristotle.

In Chapter 6 of his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines Tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; ....with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its *Catharsis* of such emotions". (op. cit., p. 35). Unfortunately for us, however, Aristotle has left the term "*Katharsis*" unexplained. In order to find its true meaning, then, we must go back to the Greek use of the word.

The Greek word "Katharos," when loosely used, gives us the sense of "clean." "Katharsis," therefore, would mean "the process of cleaning" or "purification." The tragic effect then consists in the "purification or refinement of pity and fear. It was this view of Tragedy that held the field for a very long time. In point of fact, the word is used by Aristotle unmistakably in this sense in Chapter 17 of the same book: "One must mind, however, that the episodes<sup>1</sup> are appropriate, like the fit of madness in Orestes, which led to his arrest, and the purifying,<sup>2</sup> which brought about his salvation." (op. cit., p. 62) It is evident from the above quotation that the word, 'Katharsis' cannot but be taken in the sense of purification in such a context. Plato, too, in his *Dialogues* speaks of the

'initiatory Katharsis' where it cannot but mean the process of purification one must go through before being initiated into any cult. To quote Plato : "The founders of the mysteries would appear to have had a real meaning, and were not talking nonsense when they intimated in a figure long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will lie in a slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the Gods." (B. Jowett's translation of the *Dialogues*, Vol. II : *Phaedo*)

The Latin translation of the *Poetics* also has the word "Lustratio" which means cleansing or purification.

The difficulty starts when Plato in the same passage, speaks of virtue as the Katharsis of fear or pleasure : "My blessed Simmias, is there not one true coin for which all things ought to be exchanged ?—and that is wisdom ; and only in exchange for this, and in company with this, is anything truly bought or sold, whether courage or temperance or justice. And is not all true virtue the companion of wisdom, no matter what fears or pleasures or other similar goods or evils may or may not attend her ? But the virtue which is made up of these goods, when they are served from wisdom and exchanged with one another, is a shadow of virtue only, nor is there any freedom or health or truth in her ; but in the true exchange there is a purging away of all these things, and temperance, and justice, and courage, and wisdom herself are the *purgation*<sup>1</sup> of them." (Ibid). The word 'Katharsis' can only mean 'deliverance,' 'expulsion' or 'elimination' in the context. We are thus face to face with two widely divergent approaches to the function of Tragedy : the one ethical—that of purification, the other psychotherapeutic—that of deliverance. Our problem now is to discover which of these two approaches will be more in keeping with the general spirit of the *Poetics*.

In Greek medicine 'Katharsis' means 'elimination.' Aristotle must have been familiar with the meaning, for he knew all the Sciences of his time ; besides, his father was a famous court physician. Plato speaks of two sorts of 'Katharsis' : 'Katharsis' in soothsaying, and Pharmaceutical 'Katharsis' by means of irritating drugs. The latter gives us the sense of expulsion by excitement—a sort of an *Homoeopathic* process in which the feelings are first excited, and then expelled. Aristotle also seems to give us the same clue by his use of the word "wherewith." Certain passages in the last book of his *Politics* only confirm our impression all the more. Thus, he says : 'A further argument against the flute (besides the technique which it requires) is the fact that it does not express a state of character, but rather a mood of religious excitement ; and it should there-

fore be used on those occasions when the effect to be produced on the audience is *release of emotion* (Katharsis), and not instruction." (Politics: Book VIII : translation by Ernest Barker, p. 347).

To quote another passage where Aristotle speaks of music :  
"Any affection which strongly moves the souls of several persons will move the souls of all, and will only differ from person to person with a difference of degree. Pity, fear, and inspiration is one to which a number of persons are particularly liable. These persons, as we can observe for ourselves, are affected by religious melodies ; and when they come under the influence of melodies which fill the soul with religious excitement they are calmed and restored as if they had undergone a medical treatment and *purging*."

The above sentiment may be taken as an excellent answer to Plato's charge against Tragedy that it fosters weakening and unnerving by exciting the unhealthy emotions of pity and fear. Plato stopped in the initial stages of the process. Aristotle goes further to state that the emotions are stimulated only to be expelled.

Aristotle was really after a solution of the paradox of tragic pleasure. The pleasure of tragedy, as suggested by him, is the pleasure of relief from the oppressive burden of the painful emotions of pity and fear. The feelings are aroused only to be worked off. The entire process is one of expulsion by excitation. By now, this theory of expulsion is the standard explanation of 'Katharsis.'

The first record of the modern recognition that Aristotle might have meant 'expulsion' by 'Katharsis' is that of Sepulveda, a Spanish writer of the 16th century. But it is mainly to Bernays and Weil, two German scholars of the mid-nineteenth century, that we owe the modern explanation of the word. Ingram Bywater, by numerous quotations from Greek literature, succeeded in showing that Aristotle meant it.

Thus, Proclus, the last great neo-Platonist of the 5th century A.D., says, in course of a commentary on the *Republic* of Plato : "The drama has a therapeutic rather than a directly moral effect ; and the excitement it supplies is required by us at times to 'Katharsicise' certain emotions and relieve the soul of the disquietude they would cause if defrauded of the satisfaction naturally due to them."

Proclus also adds that this was Aristotle's answer to Plato's strictures on Drama. But we do not find this idea explicitly in the extant *Poetics*. It might have been there in the lost portions of the book. Bywater also quotes the first English reference to the concept of Katharsis

made by Robert Peterson while translating the *Galateo* of Casa, in 1976. Speaking of the effect of tragedy on men, Peterson says that by their weeping they are "healed of their infirmity" (i.e., susceptibility to tears).

Such, then, is the process of 'Katharsis.' We may very well sum up the process by using the lines of Coleridge in *the Garden of Boccaccio* (written of course in a different context) :

"And many a verse which to myself I sang,  
That woke the tear, yet stole away the pang."

We must, however, have a passing glance at the other side of the issue, viz., the theory of purification which presents itself in a variety of forms. Heinsius, a famous Dutch scholar of the 17th century, first started the theory of purification from excess and this view was supported by no less people than Milton and Lessing. Lessing, again sought to give it a specific shape in the light of the Aristotelian ethic. Tragedy according to him, moderates pity and fear to the mean, thus transforming them into virtues. Another school holds that the purification is really of the painful elements, by the consciousness of their artistic illusion. Yet another sets forth that pity and fear are exalted into noble forms. A fourth one again asserts that pity and fear are purified from their self-regarding element.

How, then, does the other side really stand? Lessing's conception is rather curious. Accepting moderation for the moment, what necessary connexion is there between pure and moderate pity and fear? How again is this moderation brought about? Pity and fear, it might be said, weaken us through frequent excitement, and thus they are moderated. But would it not rather create a high-strung mind? Besides, dramatic performances were not at all frequent in ancient Greece. The Greeks had only two series of them: at the times of the Great Winter and Spring Festivals of the god Dionysus. Lessing's assumption, therefore, is unhistorical, for it does not hold good of the Aristotelian theory. This is again an additional point in favour of the theory of expulsion—for expulsion by excitement can only be indulged in infrequently.

The 'purification,' with all its varied connotations, does not give us a good explanation of the paradox of tragic pleasure. It cannot also answer the charges of Plato. Moreover, it sheds no light on the word 'wherewith' in Aristotle's definition of Tragedy—and Aristotle hardly uses an unnecessary word in the *Poetics*. Finally, the acceptance of the purification theory will not tally with the general tone of Aristotle in this book. Purification is somewhat ethical, and quotations from the *Politics* have already shown us that Aristotle keeps the ethical and the therapic mean-

ings of the word 'Katharsis' apart. The tone and spirit of the entire *Poetics* urges us to take this word in the sense of expulsion.

Milton recognises the sense of expulsion in his discussion on : "Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his (i.e., Aristotle's) assertion ; for so, in Physic, things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humours."

The ultimate effect of Tragedy meant by Aristotle, is also to be found in Milton—in the last line of his *Samson Agonistes* :

"And calm of mind all passion spent."

Tragedy is worth having because it brings about this "calm of mind all passion spent."

Accepting now the theory of expulsion by excitation, what is the permanent value of the concept of 'Katharsis' as a critical theory ? In treating this theory we must take into account the two following points : the demand for a particular kind of tragic effect, and the process by which this effect is suggested to be brought about. About the process, however, there is much room for controversy. For one thing, *the overloading of pity and fear before expelling them is not quite easy to do. It is not quite easy either to visualize for ourselves that all pity and fear are eliminated from our minds at the end of a tragic show.* The objections, however, affect the process only ; they leave the tragic effect all the same. The ideal of Tragedy as Aristotle came to consider is that it should not leave us in a tumult. He was simply demanding something that was implicit in the practice of all Greek tragedies. Hellenic Art, we should always remember, was an art of serenity and repose.

It is a point we do not easily realise now-a-days, for in modern drama the final repose is lost due to our stage apparatus. The drop-curtain, for example, generally falls at the climax, when the storm is at its height, thus leaving the minds of the audience all in a surge. No attempt is made, therefore, to connect the tragic experience with our normal course of life. The Greek tragedy could not afford to end on a climax. The whole show was rounded off by a final chorus. There would inevitably be a toning down, and the final mood would always be one of serenity and repose and philosophic acceptance.

A tragedy on the Shakespearean stage also could not end on a climax. There would be dead bodies for being disposed of. Towards the close of a Shakespearean tragedy we generally have a matter-of-fact dialogue set in a much lower key. Thus the problem of transmission from the tragic storm to average life is solved to some extent.



Even in certain best examples of modern tragedy there is a distinct subsidence of tone towards the end. The *Strife* of Galsworthy actually ends on a note of silence ; the two antagonists—Anthony and Roberts—gaze at each other in mute admiration and gradually, their heads droop down in profound obsequy to each other. To take again the *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge. One catastrophe is heaped on another in the play. But, at the end, a procession of mourners come in carrying over the last dead body ; then a dialogue follows, and the heroine goes down on her knees and exclaims : “We must be satisfied.” It would, therefore, appear that this chastening down is perhaps the hall-mark of every great tragedy.

But, after all is said and done, it must be admitted that a great tragedy lifts our minds up to a higher phase, and in that sense its effect is moral, if not ethical, in the highest sense. The suggestion is implied in the very definition of tragedy by Aristotle that it deals with an action which is ‘serious’ and has ‘magnitude.’ It is the seriousness and magnitude of its interest which ‘make us go down to the fundamental mystery of the human existence apart from the surface bubbles of life constituting the day-to-day cycle of human activities. In this sense, expulsion of pity and fear also leads us to a purification and chastening down of the mind and thus the age-old conflict among scholars with regard to the exact meaning of the word ‘Katharsis’ too is resolved. As a matter of fact, Milton has taken tragedy in a highly moral sense. .

## REFERENCES

1. i.e., episodes in the plot of a play.
2. ‘Katharsis’ in the original.
3. ‘Katharsis’

# THE CITY IN THE NOVELS OF DICKENS AND DOSTOEVSKY

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SUDESHNA CHAKRAVARTY

## I

IN their novels we find Dickens and Dostoevsky recording an experience that was new to their century—the experience of living in a vast rapidly expanding city, whose transformation was going on before their very eyes, signalling the end of the “natural life”, the beginning of “modernity”. A totally new reality was being created—amidst an agglomeration of people of all classes and occupations, where the old staples of life were giving way before new unnatural pressures ; where, paradoxically, one belonged to a vast community and yet remained isolated. Both writers are exploring this new reality, trying to find some cohesion and meaning in its bewildering diversity. Gradually, the London of Dickens and the Petersburg of Dostoevsky emerge as symbols of a whole way of life—of the society that created them. The city is at once subjective and objective, the synthesis of a personal vision and sensitively observed social fact. It is a method that Dostoevsky described as “fantastic realism”, Dickens as dwelling on “the romantic side of familiar things.”<sup>1</sup> We have a “fictional society” created by “the projection into the imaginary of a real world which the novelist has recorded to the best of his ability and the projection into reality of a personal myth, expressing his self-knowledge.....his notion of the material and spiritual forces whose field is the human being.”<sup>2</sup>

## II

In a letter to John Forster in 1846, written from Lausanne, Dickens declares that he finds it impossible to write when away from London, owing to “the absence of streets and numbers of figures..... The toil and labour of writing day by day without that magic lantern is immense”. The word, “magic lantern” is significant—pointing to the magical, wondrous quality of London life as he portrays it. The crowded city is a

phenomenon to which many writers have reacted with distrust and fear. Book VII of *The Prelude* shows Wordsworth's reaction to the city crowd—

“How often in the overflowing streets  
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said  
Unto myself, the face of every one  
That passes by me is a mystery”.<sup>3</sup>

This mystery and anonymity is also present in many crowd scenes in Dickens but what is also to be noted is how often Dickens tries to penetrate this mystery, to draw closer and see the crowd not as a faceless mass but as a collection of individuals, each with his unique character. It would not be too fanciful to say that the innumerable characters in his novels are a direct reflection of the bustling crowded quality of city streets. But the impression we get is not of a faceless crowd—the characters follow each other in rapid succession, but each is scrutinised and established as an individual in his own right. Wordsworth, coming upon the blind beggar in the street with a placard on his chest to say who he is, finds

“in this label...a type  
Or emblem, of the utmost that we know.  
Both of ourselves and of the universe.”<sup>4</sup>

Dickens too reads his character externally, through speech, appearance and gestures. He cannot give us any elaborate analysis of their ideas or motives—such an omniscience is impossible in this teeming complex milieu. But he makes these external gestures indicative of the inner man. It is the kind of interest that impels him to reconstruct a man's life story from his clothes.<sup>5</sup>

Dickens' early journalism has not been given much serious attention, but it is interesting to consider the *Sketches by Boz* in attempting to understand his treatment of the city. The title is significant—*Sketches by Boz: Illustrative of the Life of Everyday People*. His attention is riveted almost exclusively on the most ordinary people—the down-and-out, the petty bourgeoisie (very similar in fact to the social position of the characters of Dostoevsky's urban novels). “Never before has been shown such enduring interest in the commonplace” remarked Gissing. It is the zest with which he describes his scenes, his eye for the astonishing variety in what to a less perceptive observer would have seemed commonplace and uniform, that give the *Sketches* an original quality. It is indeed a distinctive feature of Dickens' portrayal of city life.

Alain sees Dickens' London built up like coral from the cumulative

force of descriptions of individuals.<sup>6</sup> In the *Sketches* he does give us a swift succession of scenes of city life, each described in vivid detail. But in the later novels the city emerges as an organic unity with a distinctive character. Journalistic observation is combined with personal vision.

The image of the maze—one of Dickens' favourite images for the city—occurs in "Seven Dials."<sup>7</sup> The confusion which is here benign becomes dark and sinister in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver, fleeing from Mr. Bumble, seeks refuge in the anonymity of London. But the first person he meets in London is the Artful Dodger. The city is now a world of evil, waiting to ensnare the innocent. Beneath the veneer of polite society lies the underworld of Fagin's gang. It is a microcosm with its own rules and obligations—in many ways a parody of the world of middle-class morality. For Fagin too has a "stern morality"—their gang is referred to as a "respectable coterie."<sup>8</sup>

The nightmarish quality of the descriptions has often been noted. Fagin who is so often seen crouching over a low fire has a marked likeness to the devil. The city itself is usually seen in the dark—its streets are labyrinthine, confusing, and there is always a sense of menace. Oliver, when going back to the book-stall, finds himself trapped once again—

"Darkness had set in ; it was a low neighbourhood ; no help was near ; resistance was useless. In another moment he was dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts."<sup>9</sup> Note too how the houses seem mostly derelict, tottering on the brink of collapse—indeed, they are constantly described as "dens" and "burrows," and their inhabitants seem less than human. Fagin is likened to "some loathsome reptile."<sup>10</sup> As John Baylay says—"In presenting his characters as animals, purposeful, amoral and solitary in their separate colonies, with no gregariousness or power of cohesion, he draws a terrifying imaginative indictment of what private life may be like in an open society."<sup>11</sup>

The murder of Nancy changes everything. Fagin's gang, which had been skulking and hidden for so long, comes out in the open—its name is on everybody's lips. And the divided, atomised life of the city suddenly becomes united in a great threatening mob, eager to hunt out the criminal. Ironically, the animals now change back into their human nature—for the first time Dickens enters the consciousness of Sikes and Fagin. Sikes flees into the country, but finds no escape. Like Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* he must return to the city—if only to face the mob—"it seemed as though the whole city had poured out its population to curse him."<sup>12</sup>

*Oliver Twist* oscillates between two worlds—the nightmarish world

of the city, and the pastoral retreat of the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow—equally unreal and dream-like in quality. Where one has the intensity of nightmare, the other has the quality of wishfulfilment. The pattern is one which forms the basis of all his novels of the city. In each case he brings an isolated individual to confront the crowded city which becomes an image of modern mass society. His concern is with the possibility of finding a meaningful life within this environment. In each case the final solution is a retreat into domestic happiness—the hearth provides a citadel of refuge against the formless confusion of the city. But the possibility of such a retreat becomes more and more remote—it becomes difficult to shut off the sanctuary from the society outside. The whole plot movement of *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit* emphasises the interconnectedness of this apparently atomised society, so that any form of isolation becomes impossible. Even in *Oliver Twist* where the Eden-idyll is so complete the other threatening world intrudes upon the pastoral retreat. The appearance of Fagin in Oliver's nightmare is startling (Oliver is often found in semi-conscious states). There is also the device of similarities and recurrences. Fagin's group forms a grotesque family with Fagin as the father-figure. Nancy, when enquiring for Oliver at the police station, parodies the emotions of a devoted sister.

In order to understand how the image of the city emerges in the later novels one must trace its development through the early works. *Nicholas Nickleby* brings to the fore another quality of urban life which in novels like *Little Dorrit* will become a mark of the urban consciousness. The Crummles troupe form the centre of the novel for nearly all the characters are involved in some form of role-playing, desperately playing up to some idealised image of themselves. It is a comic version of the self-deluding illusions in which the characters of *Little Dorrit* are encapsulated—each playing a role, refusing to recognise reality. In the early novels role-playing can even have a positive value, as when Dick Swiveller in *The Old Curiosity Shop* by casting himself in the role of knighterrant rescues the Marchioness. But this same fantasising leads to the grandiose dreams of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. For Dostoevsky's city is also a dreamer's city where men seek to escape from monotony in illusion.

The private world of illusion is an indication of the isolation of the characters, making them turn inward. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* this is carried to a further extreme, and now the self becomes divided. Mrs Gamp has to project part of herself into the imagined figure of Mrs Harris, who exists solely to admire her and assure her of her worth. The shadowy

Mr. Nadgett who writes letters to himself belongs to "a race peculiar to the city ; who are secrets as profound to one another as they are to the rest of mankind."<sup>13</sup> His whole life is spent probing the secrets of others—he is the first detective in Dickens.

This novel shows Dickens attempting to find some unity in the fragmented world of the city. This he partly achieves through the elaborate swindle of the Anglo-Bengalee Insurance Company which as P. N. Furbank points out,<sup>14</sup> has something of the same role as the Chancery suit of *Bleak House*. He also relies on co-incidence—as in the way Bailey is made to link Todgers's the Pecksniffs, the Anglo-Bengalee, Mrs Gamp and Poll Sweedlepipe.

But the complexity of Dickens' treatment of the city must be stressed. As an image of modern mass society—fragmentary, mechanical and alienated—it will become increasingly powerful. But he never ceases to be fascinated by the variety and multitudinousness of city life. The ambiguity of tone is seen in the famous passage describing the view from Todgers's. London is "on terms of close relationship and alliance" with Todgers's, for as a boarding-house Todgers's is a city within a city. It is set in the heart of the city—buried within "devious mazes," surrounded by tokens of decay and death. Yet the labyrinth is also utterly humanised—we note Dickens' delight in the "ancient inhabitants" of the region.<sup>15</sup> The view from Todgers's is a bewildering one. But Young Bailey has a zest for the noise and confusion for he lingers behind to walk on the parapet. And Young Bailey with his unquenchable vitality and exuberance is at the heart of the novel. Thus London can still seem to the Misses Pecksniff to be "a city in the clouds, to which they had been travelling all night up a magic beanstalk."<sup>16</sup>

This dualism continues in the subsequent novels. The city, though a human creation, has gradually come to acquire a will of its own—a force which overwhelms its inhabitants as well as animating its buildings and threatens to pervert all human values. We find him searching for some way in which the basic values of decency and goodness can be preserved in this environment. For, in this new civilization of which the city is an embodiment all normal values seem to be lost and very often the individual finds himself confronted by a totally alien society. This situation is symbolised in the figure of the lonely individual in the crowd. Thus Florence is lost in "the wild wilderness of London"....."carried onward in a stream of life.....flowing, indifferently, past marts and mansions, prisons, churches....."<sup>17</sup> The connection between Dombay and the city which forms the centre of his world is one of spirit. His

house takes on the character of its occupant—"as blank a house inside as outside."<sup>18</sup> In such an environment all normal values are inevitably distorted. Thus a baptism ceremony carries suggestions of death. Images of death intrude even in the marriage of Florence and Walter.

To Harriet Carker the travellers to London seem to pass on "to the monster roaring in the distance."<sup>19</sup> But Dickens does not merely look at the city from afar. He draws closer, showing the life in the streets. He shows us men and women actually striving to preserve their humanity, human vitality struggling to survive within the indifferent system that man himself has created. The gloom of the Dombey mansion is set against the strolling variety in the streets. Even at Paul's funeral there are the "rosy children" in the background. At the crucial moments in the Dombey household, the chorus of servants and street folk provide a background of normal humanity. A retreat from the confused city is sought in Sol Gills and Captain Cuttle, whose imaginative interest in life at sea provides them an escape from this ethos of materialism.

Indeed, in *Dombey* Dickens' vision is not so sombre. He can even contemplate a change in this way of life, embodied in the final conversion of Dombey. Such Utopian visions will become difficult to sustain—later, no compromise will be possible between individual fulfilment and the mechanical routine of urban life.

With *Bleak House* one finds for the first time a complex expression of his vision of the city as a unified whole. Superficially the world of the city may seem fragmented, but all the apparently unrelated worlds are found to be linked together. Men in this city do belong to one another—their fragmentary experiences cohere to define a whole way of life. The links between the atomised worlds may be enforced through a series of similarities. Krook is a parody of the Lord Chancellor. Miss Flite, Richard Carstone, Tom Jarndyce-Gridley, share a common fate. Jo who "don't know nothink" parodies the blindness of the fashionable world. There are also the many cases of false parents—Mrs Jellyby, Mrs Pardiggle, Lady Dedlock, Mr. Turveydrop—even the Lord High Chancellor who is a father-figure—and, side by side, the many orphans and neglected children.<sup>20</sup>

The plot serves to bring out the way people are bound together—from Lady Dedlock of Chesneywold to Jo of Tom-all Alone's. For this Dickens chooses the plot of melodrama, with its unexpected turns of fate, its sudden reversals, and its reliance on co-incidence. Co-incidences provide him with a way of bringing together the disconnected.

But all links become obscured in the crowded confused city. People become isolated, unable to come to terms with this bewilderingly vast and complex society. Hence, the fog becomes the connecting symbol for this city. The all-embracing fog of the opening chapter connects the different worlds but also obscures and mystifies. The London that the impersonal observer describes is most often shrouded in darkness and fog. The absence of natural light is an indication of the unnaturalness of this life. The flakes of soot are like snowflakes "gone into mourning for the death of the sun."<sup>21</sup> So many of the interiors are dark and gloomy. Throughout there are signs that this society is perilously close to decay. At the heart of London stands Tom-all-alone's—representing the ultimate in squalor and degradation. Its buildings are all "tottering," its inhabitants are like "vermin parasites," faceless and barely human—"a concourse of imprisoned demons."<sup>22</sup> The descriptions of Tom-all-alone's have the intensity of a nightmare. It represents the hell towards which the entire society seems to be moving. Nor can its presence be ignored, for it takes revenge for its neglect by spreading infection and disease.

The image of the individual lost in the indifferent crowd recurs. We find Jo gazing at the Cross of St. Paul's "glittering above a red and violet-tinted cloud of smoke.....the crowned confusion of the great confused city."<sup>23</sup> Esther too on her arrival in London finds the streets "in such a distracting state of confusion that I wondered how people kept their senses."<sup>24</sup>

The confusion and unnaturalness of this existence results in mystery. So many of the characters become involved in mystery and secrecy. Poor Mr. Snagsby finds himself embroiled in a mystery that he cannot understand. Others, like Tulkinghorn, Guppy, Bucket, or Mrs Snagsby, try to probe the secrets of others.

Nevertheless, the city is not totally devoid of human vitality. As in *Dombey*, we have the street chorus of Mrs Piper and Mrs Perkins and the Harmonic Meeting at Sol's Arms, forming a background of common humanity against which we see the gruesome drama of Nemo's suicide and Krook's spontaneous combustion. But the possibility of leading any meaningful life in this milieu is becoming increasingly remote. The pastoral retreat of Bleak House cannot shut itself off from the sick decaying society—after all, it is also involved in the Chancery Suit. The moribund city life intrudes through the infection that leaves Esther permanently disfigured. At the end, unlike *Dombey*, this society remains essentially unaltered.



By now the city has emerged as a symbol of a way of life. It has become a force that can stifle all individual vitality. In *Little Dorrit* the city is delineated in terms of atmosphere—a dominant mood that colours both its physical landscape and the lives of its inhabitants. Monotony is the outstanding quality of this city. Its oppressive nature is brought out in the description of a Sunday in London.<sup>25</sup> The physical reflects the spiritual—the monotony of the view corresponds to the drab monotonous lives of the citizens. The same deadening routine and monotony is seen in the description of the Merdle establishment, or the street where Miss Wade lives, where all the people in the street seem aimless, having nothing to do—like the news-sellers “announcing an extraordinary event that never happened and never would happen”.<sup>26</sup> The “dull houses” are like “places of imprisonment”.<sup>27</sup> This links up with the prison motif of the novel. But apart from the Marshalsea Prison or Mrs. Clennam’s incarceration we also notice how the image becomes symbolical of the mind. Nearly all the characters evade reality by adopting a persona which they present to the world, till they become trapped in their illusion and the role takes over. It is the same with the Dorrits, Mrs Clennam, Mrs Gowan or Mrs Merdle playing to Society.

It is also interesting that side by side with the animism which is always present in Dickens one finds also examples of the other extreme—of seeing human beings in terms of lifeless objects. It reflects his conception of people not being able to control their own lives but rather being controlled by the System, by Society, by great impersonal forces. Thus Mrs Merdle becomes the Bosom, her footmen become Powder.

However while describing *Little Dorrit* one must always be careful not to over-schematise. After all, one must never forget Dickens’ delight in the exuberance of even all manifestations of falsehood and sham—his joyous portrayal of every detail of self-deception. Nor must one overlook the positive values one finds even in this society—indications that somehow human values survive in the desolate city. There is Flora’s absurd but genuine goodness, the good will of the Plornishes.

For even in this city there is possibility for the individual of attaining happiness. Little Dorrit and Arthur can find meaning and purpose in life through their relationship. Yet the ending makes clear the precariousness of this condition—“They went down quietly into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed ; and as they passed along.....the noisy and the eager and the arrogant and the froward and the vain fretted and chafed and made their usual uproar”.<sup>28</sup>

When we come to the last novel of the city, *Our Mutual Friend*, we find that it ends not with the usual tying up of loose ends, or with the individual who has attained salvation, but with the "Voice of Society" which has remained unchanged. Individual are only incidental to it—Eugene's conversion merely leaves an empty place at the Veneerings' dining table.

Even his complex vision of the inter-relatedness of society is breaking down under the pressure of his growing scepticism. Very little actual contact can be made between the fragmented worlds of this city. The over-riding of class barriers in the marriage of Eugene and Lizzie is incomprehensible to Society. Unity in the city can only be found through symbols like those of the river and the dust-heaps—though the physical reality of these images must not be forgotten. This society also achieves some unity through what one may describe as the principle of doubleness. One notes the numerous cases of disguise (as in John Harmon or Headstone) or duplicity (in Boffin, the Lammles, Fledgeby). There are also reversals of natural roles. Bella calls her Pa a younger brother, Lizzie loves her brother like a son.

Thus through the novels one notes the emergence of the city as the symbol of the modern civilization of which it is the unique product—sharing its most characteristic qualities—chaotic, confused, fragmented, apparently lacking all normality or order. The problem Dickens confronts is the possibility of achieving stability in what seems a chaotic society. Even to the end he clings to his faith in the possibility of human happiness. His good characters are constantly threatened by an alienated world but they are also constantly saved and finally given shelter in an Utopia of domestic bliss. But the threats of this society become increasingly too real to be conjured away, so that the final escape becomes more and more doubtful. The novels show a progress towards disillusion, But what is also remarkable is his resistance to it—to the very last there remains a citadel of goodness persisting in the confused city he so very vividly evokes. When we come to Dostoevsky we find that this ballast has gone. Dostoevsky shares many of the elements of Dickens' vision, but can no longer find any alternative framework of values to set against the urban world. His city is even more crowded and complex, lacking all normality or proportion or community.

### III

The city forms the background of Dostoevsky's first novel and it is felt as a presence in most of his early works, culminating in *Crime and*

*Punishment*. From its presence as colouring and background in *Poor People* it gradually acquires a deeper significance till it becomes an image of the human condition. As in Dickens Dostoevsky's early journalism shows him confronted with the theme of the city, groping his way towards an attitude to it. But the difference between the *Sketches by Boz* and Dostoevsky's articles for the *Petersburg News* must be emphasised. In the *Sketches* Dickens gives us detailed descriptions of various city scenes. His interest in the city is still that of the detached journalist interested in its variety and novelty. Later in the novels, we find this social observation (in the manner of Mayhew) becoming wedded to a personal vision of urban existence. The city, originally seen purely as a physical entity, becomes apprehended in terms of its mood and atmosphere. Dostoevsky from the beginning is interested not in the various aspects of city life but rather in the effect of the city on human life. Instead of variety, he finds monotony and isolation. The focus has shifted from the crowded city street to the solitary room of the city-dweller. He pictures the citizens "sitting lazily at home," having little to do. And in order to escape from the tedium of reality men are driven to fantasy. Thus emerges the figure of the "dreamer"—a recurring figure in Dostoevsky city—what he calls "a Petersburg nightmare."<sup>29</sup> Already the city has emerged as the symbol of a whole way of life—drab and meaningless.

Yet it would be wrong to concentrate exclusively on the symbolic significance of Dostoevsky's city. His Petersburg is also firmly grounded in reality. Admittedly, his portrait of the city is a limited one, for he concentrates almost exclusively on the poor quarters and most of his characters belong to the lower middle-classes—the petty government officials, the impoverished students. But within these limits the city is vividly delineated. Petersburg emerges as a real city, so that the unnaturalness of its life is all the more emphasised.

Above all, Petersburg is a place of grinding poverty. Dostoevsky's interest in the down-and-out is made obvious by the very title of his first novel—*Poor People*. Like Mr. Golyadkin or the Underground Man, or the heroes of Gogol's Petersburg Tales, Makar Devushkin is a petty clerk and in his uneasy relationship with his employer and his colleagues we already have an image of the precariousness of Petersburg existence. He works hard but he is unable to save himself from being crushed by poverty.

The whole story is acted out in the Petersburg slums. At the beginning Devushkin has just moved into his new lodgings. It is worth noting how often Dostoevsky's characters search for lodgings—it underlines the rootlessness that marks urban life. They usually lived in small cramped

- rooms in corners of large houses with a strange assortment of lodgers. These squalid interiors recur again and again in his city. Never does Dostoevsky dwell on the variety of city life. Rather the city is usually coloured by the despondent mood of his characters—when Devushkin goes out in the morning everything seems to have a careworn air. The trials of Devushkin and Varvara represent the struggle for existence in a hostile environment. City life has become marked by its isolation and crushing poverty.

The mood becomes even more sombre in the nightmarish story *The Double*, that strange "Poem of St. Petersburg." And with it emerges the figure of the dreamer as a typical urban figure. The city is a strangely unreal place where events often seem to be happening as in a dream, where distinctions between fantasy and reality break down.<sup>30</sup> In the opening chapter Mr. Golyadkin is described as "a man who is not yet quite sure.....whether what is happening around him is real and actual and not the continuation of his disordered dreams."<sup>31</sup> The whole action hinges on the precarious distinction between dream and reality—one is never sure whether the Double is real or a product of Mr. Golyadkin's diseased imagination.

No other story perhaps has so nightmarish an atmosphere. A sense of mystery hovers over the whole novel. Mr. Golyadkin, we learn from his visit to the doctor, is tormented by a sense of being threatened—we are never told who his persecutors are. The confusions of his mind become transferred to his environment. The Double who menaces him is also himself—the deeper and more sinister side of his own mind. Reality and illusion interpenetrate. The descriptive passages have a strange dream-like quality, as in the scene where Mr. Golyadkin first meets his Double. It is a night of wind and rain. The wind and rain are a projection of the turmoil in Golyadkin's mind—outer and inner are in consonance. The sombre atmosphere breeds monstrous visions. Just before he sees his double he hears flood warnings. Svidrigaylov too imagines he hears flood warnings before his suicide. One thinks of the flood in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*. It is a symbol of chaos, of the breakdown of normality.

*The Double* is possibly the most extreme representation of the strangeness and mystery of city life. Its gloomy atmosphere mirrors the "cloud of mystery and obscurity" which seems to "envelop" Golyadkin.<sup>32</sup> Events occur suddenly, inexplicably. And this mystery becomes an extension of the strangeness in the mind of the hero himself.

Gradually therefore we find that the mystery of city life is turned inward and becomes the reflection of the inscrutability of man's mind. The individual becomes the ultimate repository of the stangeness and mystery of this environment. *Notes from the Underground* carries this exploration even further. The Underground Man—again a petty official suffering from the ridicule of his colleagues, leading a typically isolated existence in his tiny room—becomes representative of the general Petersburg condition. In his Introduction, Dostoevsky remarks "If we take into consideration the conditions that have so shaped our society, people like the writer not only may, but must exist in that society".<sup>33</sup> The Underground Man belongs to Petersburg, "the most abstract and most intentional city in the world". Founded by a mere whim, on inhospitable ground, this unnatural city becomes the embodiment of the unnatural life that it harbours. The "abstract city" cut off from all natural processes of life finds its true reflection in the unnatural life of its anti-hero, living in his private world of dreams and ideas, cut off from any vital life.

Overwhelmed by the ennui of city life, the Underground Man is inevitably driven to dreaming ..... "I invented a life so that I should at any rate *live*". He has illusions of grandeur—he is tormented by dreams that he can neither disavow nor realise. Periodically he craves to break out into reality—"I was not in a position to dream for more than three months at a time, and I began to feel an irresistible urge to plunge into society".<sup>34</sup> Yet the only society available is that of a few vulgar acquaintances. His dreams are indeed loftier than the sordid reality. This oscillation between reality and illusion condemns him to perpetual vacillation. He is trapped by his environment and the self-tormenting contradictory impulses of his nature. Ultimately he is unable to follow the path of redemption offered by the saintly prostitute Lisa, a precursor of Sonya. Yet his cry of anguish is heartfelt—"They give me no.....I'm incapable of being.....good".<sup>35</sup> The "they" are at once his dreamer's condition, bound to be disappointed; his neurotic craving to be humiliated; and the sordid and vulgar reality in which he remains trapped.

The Underground Man is undoubtedly an extreme case but he loses none of his representativeness for that..... "After all I have only carried to a logical conclusion in my life what you yourselves didn't dare take more than half-way....."<sup>36</sup> From this isolated dreamer who tortures himself with his own perversities it is but a logical step to another solitary dreamer who, also cut off from outside life, will breed monstrous ideas

which he will try to realise in action. What is already emerging as the image of a metaphysical condition will be further elaborated in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky's most elaborate exploration of city life.<sup>37</sup>

- One notes how with Dostoevsky the city which started as background evolves into a symbol of modern existence. Yet to say that in Dostoevsky the physical city becomes the city of the mind would not be true. Petersburg in *Crime and Punishment* is also very much a real city. Dostoevsky's original plan was to write a social novel on the theme of *The Drunkards*, dealing with the topical issues of drunkenness and prostitution. The social realistic core of the novel must not be overlooked. But we note how the concrete objective details are used to create an atmosphere, an emotional tonality corresponding to the mood of the inhabitants of the city (in the manner of the later Dickens). A few motifs recur, the hot stifling crowded streets, the pubs full of drunks, and, indoors, the tiny cramped rooms and dark narrow staircases. They create an atmosphere which becomes a mirror image of Raskolnikov's spiritual condition. The same atmosphere carries over in Raskolnikov's dreams (for he too is a dreamer). The real city has an unreal quality which makes it barely distinguishable from the dream city. In contrast to the parched and stifling atmosphere of the city which we see through Raskolnikov's consciousness we have the chaos and rain of the "Spiritual landscape" evoked in the description of Svidrigaylov's last night before his suicide. His vision of chaos corresponds to the turmoil in his mind ..... "By morning the streets in the low-lying parts of the town will be flooded, the basement and cellars will be under water, the drowned rats will be floating on the surface and in the wind and rain people, cursing and soaked to the skin, will start moving their rubbish to the upper floors....."<sup>38</sup>

The interiors also have a distinct atmosphere. Here again one finds recurrent images—the dark narrow, dirty staircases, and the cramped tiny rooms where the characters lead their solitary existences. The tiny interiors become symbolic of their spiritual condition, reminding us of Dickens' houses which so often take on the characters of their occupants. But what is different here is the uniformity of atmosphere. All the rooms are equally tiny, cramped, claustrophobic. Raskolnikov's tiny cramped room is a mark of his isolation—"He had withdrawn from the world completely, like a tortoise into its shell".<sup>39</sup> Later in fact he admits to Sonya that his room influenced his mind—"I sat skulking in my room like a spider.....Do you realise.....that low ceilings and small, poky

little rooms warp both mind, and soul?"<sup>40</sup> The room Svigrigaylov takes in the hotel is also small and low with a dirty bed.

The tiny rooms with their trapped inhabitants become symbols of the lives people lead in this unnatural city. Life can hardly be normal in such a setting. To Svidrigaylov Petersburg is "a city of semi-lunatics" where "so many strange, harsh and gloomy things exert an influence on a man's mind".<sup>41</sup> Dangerously cut off from normality, people indulge in fantasies and dreams. Both Raskolnikov and Svidrigaylov have dreams—even Sonia sees ghosts. Raskolnikov has been "amusing (himself) by indulging in fantastic dreams". At the beginning he "merely excited himself by their hideous but fascinating authenticity", but gradually "he had unconsciously got 'accustomed to looking on his 'hideous' dream as a practical proposition."<sup>42</sup> The boundary between reality and fantasy is becoming precarious. At moments he is not sure if he is acting consciously. Note how when Svidrigaylov first appears he seems to Raskolnikov to be a continuation of his dream. And indeed, through his crime Raskolnikov is attempting to translate his fantasy into reality—to realise his own image of himself as a Napoleon, towering over the mediocre masses.

The unnatural city, the isolation, the vivid dreams—all lead to Raskolnikov's crime. Yet one cannot analyse his crime as the product of social factors, in the manner of a naturalistic novel. Dostoevsky's notebooks show his increasing uncertainty above his hero's real motives for the murder of the two women. Raskolnikov's motives are never fully clarified. Dostoevsky's characters refuse to be resolved into easy, graspable formulae, for to him the mind of man becomes the ultimate repository of all the chaos and mystery of life as it is defined by the city. With its rootlessness, its fragmentariness, its absence of all conventional norms, its squalor and sordidness, its loneliness and yet its stifling crowds, the chaotic city becomes a symbol of the chaotic mind of man. Dostoevsky not only shows us the lives of men as they are shaped by urban life, but he also raises the metaphysical question of the possibility of any meaningful life in such a milieu. Raskolnikov acts guided by his intellectual theories, which have no relevance to life as it is actually lived by people. But he cannot ignore the other part of his nature. Despite his isolation, he still belongs to a community and he cannot forget that his crime is a crime against life. He is repeatedly dismayed by the disparity between the visions of himself as created by his theories, and his actual promptings and misgivings—for he is still obstinately aware of being joined to other men by feelings of brotherhood. It is this "human"

side of his nature that points to his redemption. The contradictions in his own nature become mirrored in the contrasts in city life. The streets are always stifling, crowded and oppressive. Yet life is here in these streets, and it is here that Raskolnikov is able to forge some kind of contact with others. He is prompted by an obscure feeling to communicate with the passers-by. Very often his efforts are repulsed and he feels that "the whole world was dead and indifferent—dead to him, and to him alone".<sup>43</sup> Yet in the streets he is prompted to give money to the beggar woman and the prostitute Duklida or to rescue the drunk and seduced girl from her pursuer (though characteristically, immediately afterwards he lapses into indifference). He helps the Marmeladov family unstintingly and in the affection of little Polya he even finds a sense of brotherhood—"Enough! .....No more delusions.....Life is real! Haven't I lived just now?"<sup>44</sup> And finally, "overcome by an uncontrollable impulse" he kneels down in the middle of the square and "kisses the filthy earth with joy and rapture".<sup>45</sup> As in the memorable scene where he had kissed Sonya's feet, this is an act of homage to all humanity. Yet, characteristically, even at this moment he is jeered by the passers-by.

For all its squalor, the city represents the true reality for Raskolnikov. "He must learn to come to terms with it. It is impossible to try to escape. When he escapes into the country, "the lonelier the place the more strongly did he become aware of some close and alarming presence, a presence that did not so much inspire him with fear as get on his nerves, and he hurried back to town, mingled with the crowds, went into restaurants and pubs.....there he seemed to feel more at ease and even more solitary".<sup>46</sup> Magnificence and splendour seem incongruous in this city—it is in its very squalor that the essence of city life is to be found. The splendour of the view from the Neva at sunset leaves him troubled—"This gorgeous sight filled him with blank despair".<sup>47</sup>

Raskolnikov's response to the city is ambivalent in tone, and through him Dostoevsky keeps our own attitude open. The shifts in tone do not allow us to settle in any fixed response to city life.

It is the same kind of complexity that we noted in Dickens' response to the city. In both urban life, chaotic and unnatural, still somehow manages to retain a spark of human vitality. The city, with its contradictions and complexities, becomes symbolic of modern existence. It is thus appropriate that both novelists use the grotesque in their portrayal of city life. For, as Victor Hugo realised, "it is from the fruitful union of the grotesque with the sublime, that the modern spirit



is born—so complex, so various in its forms, so inexhaustible in its creations, and quite opposed, in so being to the uniform simplicity of the classical spirit”.<sup>48</sup> One can cite numerous examples of Dickens’ use of the grotesque—as for example in the picture of Mr. Merdle going to commit suicide and seeming to leap and waltz and gyrate “as if he were possessed of several devils”.<sup>49</sup> Dostoevsky in his use of the grotesque is obviously influenced by Gogol’s *Petersburg Tales*. But Gogol’s ballast is dropped so that the grotesque is placed in a new perspective. What in Gogol would have been merely absurd becomes tragic in Dostoevsky. Taking a situation and highlighting its absurdities, he at the same time draws us in and involves us emotionally, so that we are left hovering between ridicule and sympathy. Even in his first novel one finds instances of this use of the grotesque—in the funeral of Pekrovsky in *Poor People* where his father runs after the coffin, his clothes flying in the wind, books falling out of his pocket. In *Crime and Punishment* one has Svidrigaylov’s vision of eternity as a bath-house full of spiders or the absurdity of his suicide before the Jew “Achilles” with his caricatured language. Dostoevsky’s use of the grotesque culminates in his treatment of the Marmeladovs—the absurd funeral supper with the squabbles between Mrs Marmeladov and her landlady, or the scene where Mrs Marmaladov rushes out into the street with her children. To quote George Gibian, “the grotesque brings a murky twilight atmosphere, blending the real and unreal, the nocturnal and diurnal so that at times we are not quite certain whether something is really happening or being dreamt.....The atmosphere is such that anything seems possible”.<sup>50</sup>

Thus the city becomes a dim twilight world, revealed in flashes at climactic moments rather than by detailed exposition. Like Dickens, Dostoevsky adopts the framework of the detective story. With its sudden revelations and its unexpected turns of plot, the detective story becomes an apt vehicle for describing the strangeness and mystery of city life. He also shares Dickens’ increasing concern with crime, especially murder and death. For the unnatural conditions imposed by city life and the equally unnatural intellectual life that it fosters, makes it the perfect theatre for crime.

But ultimately in Dostoevsky the individual becomes the repository of all the strangeness and mystery. The individual mind is as much of an enigma as the city he inhabits—as full of contradictions, eccentricities, even monstrosities. The city which he has been exploring in most of his early works finally emerges in *Crime and Punishment* as the symbol

of what is in many ways a peculiarly modern existence—rootless, incoherent, even absurd. The problem his heroes confront is the problem of finding some kind of meaning in a world that has lost most of its old norms and standards—in the “most abstract” and gloomiest city in the world.

#### IV

It would be fruitless to look for direct parallels between Dickens and Dostoevsky. One would then have to regard the relatively minor work, *The Insulted and Injured*, with its obvious similarities with *The Old Curiosity Shop*, as the most Dickensian of Dostoevsky's novels. Although Dostoevsky was a great admirer of the early Dickens, there is little evidence that he was familiar with the later novels, where Dickens' treatment of the city most nearly approximated his own. Clearly, this is a case not of tangible influence but rather of spiritual affinity. Each discovered in his own way a specifically modern experience—the experience of living in a great city. Most previous literary treatments of the city had been devoted to a cataloguing and description of its various sights and people. Now we find a synthesis of observed social fact with a subjective vision of city life. They thereby evolve a form to express their vision of urban existence, of the struggle for a purposeful life in the wilderness of the city. Ultimately the problem of urban life becomes for both a moral and metaphysical problem—a problem of the quality and purposiveness of life in an increasingly alienated society.

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15. *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Oxford University Press, 1951)—Pg. 127, 129.
16. *ibid*—Pg. 122.
17. *Dombey and Son* (Oxford University Press, 1950). Pg. 667. 668.
18. *ibid*—Pg. 22.
19. *ibid*—Pg. 480.
20. In a speech to the Society of Dorset Men in London Hardy talks of the "sense of loss" felt "not only by the Dorset mothers, but by those of every other country, at the time of their youthful sons' plunge into the City alone". (*Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*—ed. H. Orel, 1966—Pg. 75). The association of the city with a life devoid of maternal affection is significant—it can be connected with the numerous orphans in Victorian fiction left to fend for themselves in an estranging urban world.
21. *Bleak House* (Oxford University Press, 1948)—Pg. 1.
22. *ibid*—Pg. 314.
23. *ibid*—Pg. 271.
24. *ibid*—Pg. 28.
25. *Little Dorrit* (Oxford University Press, 1953)—Pgs. 28-31.
26. *ibid*—Pg. 325.
27. *ibid*—Pg. 30.
28. *ibid*—Pg. 826.
29. *Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings* translated by David Magarshack—(Vision Press, 1963), Pg. 29, 35.
30. The hero of Gogol's short story *Diary of a Madman*, another petty clerk, also tries to escape from his sordid reality through his grandiose dreams—here too the actual and the illusory become indistinguishable.
31. *The Double*—in "*The Double and Notes from the Underground*" translated by Jessie Coulson (Penguin, 1972)—pg. 127.
32. *ibid*—Pg. 225.
33. *Notes from the Underground*—Op. cit.—Pg. 13.
34. *ibid*—Pg. 60-61.
35. *ibid*—Pg. 117.
36. *ibid*—Pg. 123.
37. After this the theme of the city dwindles in importance. The evocation of Petersburg in *A Raw Youth* lacks the same intensity, nor do the Petersburg settings in *The Idiot* have the same symbolic significance.
38. *Crime and Punishment*—translated by David Magarshack (Penguin, 1966)—Pg. 519.
39. *ibid*—Pg. 49.
40. *ibid*—Pg. 430.

41. *ibid*—Pg. 478-9.
42. *ibid*—Pg. 22.
43. *ibid*—Pg. 194.
44. *ibid*—Pg. 208.
45. *ibid*—Pg. 537.
46. *ibid*—Pg. 452-3.
47. *ibid*—Pg. 132.
48. *Preface de Cromwell*—ed. M. Souriau (Paris)—Pg. 195—quoted by Fanger—*op. cit.*—Pg. 229.
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## SHELLEY AND THE ROMANTIC MILLENNIUM

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R. K. SEN

THE generally accepted attitude to Shelley has been summed up by Merryn Williams in her Introduction to *Revolutions*<sup>1</sup> (1775-1830) "Shelley was the most overtly 'political' poet of his generation, although Byron had championed the Greek rebels and the Nottingham weavers and Keats—it is not widely enough recognised—was a very serious and consistent radical. But Shelley, ever since he had been sent down from Oxford for writing *The Necessity of Atheism* had identified himself passionately with the revolutionary cause in every way possible, both as a poet and as a man. Poems like the *Masque of Anarchy* and *Men of England* are a passionate appeal to the people of England to rise in revolt."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the texts cited by Williams are comparatively less important than the poems, listed as his major work by Carlos Baker.<sup>3</sup> A more balanced defence of Shelley is by Donald H. Reiman in his preface to *Triumph of Life*. "The same barriers have kept readers and critics from seeing Shelley plain from the time his first poems were published to the present and that the difficulty of *"The Triumph"* was intimately related to the course of Shelley's reputation. The barriers that tend to obscure the achievement of every artist and every thinker.....are : first, unnatural piety : second, literary fundamentalism ; third, critical ignorance ; and fourth, the fallible editor and typesetter."<sup>4</sup> Literary fundamentalism, according to Reiman, "ignores the personae to whom the poet gives individual speeches in dramas or dramatic dialogues... ..Of the fundamentalists, the worst were the biographical critics who, ignoring both, the literary tradition out of which Shelley's art grew and the intellectual, ethical, social and aesthetic preoccupations of his prose and even his personal letters, tried to read Shelley's poetry as lightly disguised autobiography..... There are, of course personal elements in many of the poems he did publish or (like *"Julian and Maddalo"*), desired to have published, but as in the works of Dante and Milton the two great guiding spirits of his mature art, Shelley's published work always go beyond the personal dilemma to the problems of mankind, the persona of the poet becoming merely the type of the imaginative human soul."<sup>5</sup> How does Shelley who "had identified himself passionately with the revolutionary cause in every way possible "succeed in putting on the persona,—the mark,

has not been understood, far less analysed, either by the older or the younger generation of critics.

## II

Earl R. Wasserman in discussing Shelley's last poetics writes of his "Defence of Poetry," "The essay is valuable, we are usually told, primarily for its breathless rhetoric : disconcertingly eclectic, it does not (or could not possibly) reconcile its Platonism with its psychological empiricism ; by attributing creation to inspiration it becomes a defence of automatic writing ; by depending upon a single norm it collapses all arts and all poems into one and destroys the distinction between the making of poems and other superior mental pursuits ; it offers unreconciled definitions of the imagination ; it provides no viable poetics for the practical critic."<sup>6</sup> Faced with such contradictions and inconsistencies, Wasserman adds that his purpose, even though 'perverse,' "is to consider what soundness and coherence the essay may yield to a deliberately sympathetic hearing."<sup>7</sup>

Wasserman discovers the 'coherence' in Shelley's Platonism as understood by him. "It would be well, therefore, to determine the sense in which the essay is 'Platonistic,' lest we impose an extraneous Platonism on it. Throughout most of his career Shelley maintained faith in the One, the ultimate reality and absolute perfection, understood in partial contexts as the True, or the Good, or the Beautiful ; and especially in 1816-17, he reportedly wrote of it as a transcendent "Power," not inert like Plato's realm of Ideas, but dynamic like Platonic Demiurge acting *ab extra* on both nature and the human mind, and imparting form to the formless, but able to exert itself only inconstantly within the sphere of mutability. As Shelley was later to write, although it cannot be entertained, delayed or hidden by earthly forms, it makes everything "divine" when "for a moment" it is not "forbidden" by the mutability of its media, "to live within the life it bestows."

As already noted, Shelleyan One, according to Wasserman approximates to Platonic Demiurge, and *not* to the Platonic Idea. This is a distinction without a difference. Wasserman draws the distinction between a "transcendent" power and "dynamic" power and locates Shelleyan One not in the "transcendent" but in "dynamic" power. Etienne Gilson's analysis of the Platonic Good and its relation to Christian God will not bear out this contention. "The Timaeus (28c) represents a considerable effort to rise to the idea of a god who shall be the cause and father of the

universe ; but no matter how great this god may be supposed to be he has rivals in the intelligible order of Ideas, and is moreover comparable with all the members of the whole vast family of Platonic gods. He does not exclude the sidereal gods, whose author he is (Timaeus 41 a-c), nor even the divine character of the world he fashions ; first among the gods he is but one among them nevertheless, and if, in virtue of that primacy, the Demiurge of the Timaeus has been represented as "almost analogous to the Christian God,"<sup>8</sup> we must say at once that a nuance of this kind is not allowable here. Either there is one God or there are many, and a god who is "almost analogous" to the Christian God is not the Christian God at all."<sup>9</sup> Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" was not written before 1820-21, in answer to Peacock's half-serious attack on Poetry, "The Four Ages of Poetry" which came out in Oller's Literary Miscellany of 1820. "The Defence is as dogmatic in tone as Peacock's attack, though in his letters to Peacock Shelley treated the matter jokingly," writes King-Hale. He goes on and traces Shelley's views on Poetry to Plato. "Shelley's views on Poetry derive from Plato, or rather one of Plato's two divergent theories. In the Republic Poets and Painters are disparaged because they imitate life and so are one step further from the divine ideal which life itself imitates. But in the dialogues on poetic inspiration, particularly the *Ion*, which Shelley was reading when Peacock's essay reached him and translated during 1821, and the *Phaedrus*, which he read in 1820, Plato suggests poets are possessed by a divine madness and in their moments of inspiration are the God's interpreters. Shelley takes over this later argument."<sup>10</sup> Any careful Platonist knows that Plato's attitude to poetry in the earlier *Ion* and *Phaedrus* is essentially compatible with his later attitude in either *The Republic* or *The Laws*. Shelley was far too good a student of Plato not to have known it. Shelleyan Platonism as interpreted by King-Hale or more recently by Wasserman, is difficult to defend. In other words, Shelley's poetry must be interpreted from a non-Platonic standpoint. His mature interest in Dante and Milton might provide the clue to a consistent theory of poetry.

### III

An excursus into Shelley's religious beliefs is called for a correct understanding of Shelley's attitude to poetry. Shelley and Hogg had put together some notes, querying the existence of God. These notes Shelley did edit, and "before he returned to Oxford towards the end of January 1811, the notorious pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* was printed at



Worthing. The argument as summarised by King Hale, is as follows. "There are three sources for belief in a Deity : the direct evidence of the senses, the decision formed after applying reason to one's experience, and the testimony of others, provided this is not contrary to reason. From these premises and the axiom that belief is not an act of volition," it is deduced that "there is no proof of the existence of a Deity," and that "no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief."<sup>11</sup> In May, 1811 Shelley asserted that he had once been "an enthusiastic Deist," but had rejected natural religion 'from reason.'<sup>12</sup> If this be Shelley's attitude to Christianity in 1810-11, his beliefs had not substantially changed when he came to write *The Defence* in 1821. Shelley has been interpreted as a Deist. Baker's text is a letter Shelley sent Hogg on December 8, 1810. "I may not be able to adduce proofs, but I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are in themselves arguments more conclusive than any which can be adduced that some vast intellect animates Infinity..... I confess that I think Pope's "all are but parts of one tremendous whole" something more than poetry : it has ever been my favourite theory."<sup>13</sup> Shelley's reliance on Pope is hardly an argument in defence of Shelley's Deism, but has important bearing on his general attitude to poetry.

The acceptance of Dryden<sup>14</sup> and Pope as models of a romantic theory of poetry, introduces questions, not answered by a traditional exposition of Shelley's attitude, but inevitably falls into Pseudo-Platonism as a basis of Shelley's poetry. "In the *Defence of Poetry* reason is given small place. It is a mere mechanical process, which must wait upon imagination. Reason has to do with the relations which one thought bears to another ; imagination is mind acting upon those thoughts as to colour them with its own light, and comparing from them as from elements, other thoughts each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity." Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known, it is analytic ; imagination is the perception of values, it is synthetic. A reaction against the psychology of Locke appears in the comparisons between man and the lyre. The impressions driven over the mind, both from without and from within, produce ever-changing melody, as the wind does in the strings of the lyre, but there is a synthetic power within the mind which the lyre does not have, a power of accommodation among those impressions, and a power of adjustment to their external source. The result is not melody merely, but harmony also. With this process reason apparently has nothing to do. In fact Shelley inclines strongly to the Greek idea of poetic madness—that one cannot make poetry until he has divested, himself of reason."<sup>15</sup> This is unabashed Platonism. But Solve is in good company with great A.C.

Bradley.”<sup>16</sup> “It is of the first importance for the understanding of this unity in life ; it is one of his platonic traits. The Intellectual Beauty of his Hymn is absolutely the same thing as the Liberty of his Ode, the “Great spirit” of Love that he invokes to bring freedom to Naples, the One which in Adonais he contrasts with the Many, the spirit of Nature of Queen Mab, and the Vision of Alastor and Epipsychidion. The skylark of the famous stanzas is free from our sorrows, not because it is below them, but because as an embodiment of that Perfection, it knows the rapture of love without its satiety, and understands death as we cannot. The voice of the mountain, of a whole nation could hear it with the poet’s ear, would “repeal large codes of fraud and woe” ; it is the same voice as the reformer’s and the martyrs. And in the far-off day when the “plastic stress” of this power has mastered the last resistance and is all in all, outward nature, which now suffers with man, will be redeemed with him, and man, in becoming politically free, will become also the perfect lover.....When we turn to the Defence of Poetry we meet substantially the same view. There is indeed a certain change ; for Shelley is now philosophising and writing prose, and he wishes not to sing from the mid-sky, but for a while at least, to argue with his friend on the earth.”<sup>17</sup> It is always interesting when at rare moments, the great Professor turns witty. But unfortunately his exuberance has misled him completely. “Hence at first we hear nothing of that perfect power at the heart of things, and poetry is considered as a creation rather a revelation. But for Shelley we soon discover, this would be a false antithesis. The poet creates, but this creation is no more fancy of his ; it represents those forms which are common to universal nature and existence.”<sup>18</sup> and a poem is the very image of life-expressed in its external truth. The criteria of excellence chosen by Shelley are nature, existence and eternal truth. It is needless to point out that these three, at least the first two, are non-Platonic. What Shelley demands is that poetic creation (=form) is conditioned by nature, existence and truth ; but Platonic form is unconditioned by any of these ; it is conditioned by intellectualism.

The above analysis of the critical positions of Bradley, Solve and Wasserman will clearly point out that advocates of Shelley’s Platonism with reference to his theory of poetry have still a large following. In between Bradley’s Oxford Lectures (1904) and Solve’s Shelley : His Theory of Poetry (1927), there is the standard defence of Shelley’s Platonism by Miss Winstanley<sup>19</sup>. Solve’s defence of Shelley’s Platonism has

found an eloquent advocate in modern times in M.H. Abrams. He characterizes Shelley's aesthetics as Romantic Platonism. "Shelley happened to be reading Plato's *Ion* when he received Peacock's article, and had only recently translated the *Symposium*, as well as portions of some others of the more mythic dialogues. There is more of Plato in the "Defence" than in any earlier piece of English criticism, even though it is Plato who has obviously been seen through a vista of Neo-Platonic and Renaissance commentators and interpreters. But Shelley was also familiar with the poetic theory of Wordsworth and other contemporaries. For a Summary of the Platonic echoes in Shelley's "Defence", Abrams refers to Notopoulos' "Platonism of Shelley". It may be pointed out that Barrell has questioned the thesis of Notopoulos<sup>21</sup> and has gone back to Gingerich<sup>22</sup>. "Shelley's essay demonstrates, in its most uncompromising form, the tendency of a Platonic aesthetic to cancel differences, by reducing everything to a single class, and by subjecting this class to a single standard of judgement.....these several values in turn, are ultimately the attributes of a single Form or Forms; and Shelley goes beyond Plato and approximates Plotinus, for whom all considerations had been drawn irresistibly into the vortex of the One. "A poet", as Shelley puts it, "participates in the external, the infinite and the one."<sup>23</sup> But, a little later, this ardent advocate of Shelley's Platonism, Abrams changes his position. "We can also make our way through the "Defence of Poetry" on another level of discussion: and on which Shelley comes closer to the characteristic ideas and idiom of the critics of his own time. Like the Neoplatonists, Shelley implies that the Ideas have a double subsistence, both behind the veil of the material world and in the minds of man.....But in Shelley's version of these opinions, the poet sometimes turns out to express not only Platonic Ideas, but also human passions, and other mental materials which he describes in the alien psychology of English empiricism."<sup>24</sup> It is needless to say that this is a highly personal interpretation of Neo-Platonism, which is starkly intellectual and strictly monist. The more important thing in Abram's analysis is his awareness that Shelley's aesthetics is not merely about Platonic Ideas; it is equally about human passions. What is the source of this dichotomy? What can be the logical foundation of this dualism?

#### IV

Without entering into the debatable question of the double subsistence of Ideas, defended by Abrams, it is interesting to note

how a staunch advocate of Shelleyan Platonism, is making concessions to Shelley's empiricism. Abrams is fully aware that Shelley's poetic theory takes note of 'human passions and other mental materials'. It is not necessary to elaborate further the points of agreement and difference in the elucidation of Shelleyan Platonism by A.C. Bradley, Solve, Wasserman, Winstanley. Notopoulos and Abrams. What is even more interesting is that all of them have gone back not to Plato's *Ion* (defending poetic frenzy or manike) but to the chariot image of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Shelley had translated *Ion*, and his interest in this aspect of Platonism, poetic madness or frenzy is well known. But manike forms a very small part of Shelleyan poetic theory, and a reconstruction of Shelleyan aesthetics on the basis of manike is clearly misleading. "Although care should be exercised not to overemphasise the influence of Dante's poetry exerted upon the composition of *Epipsychidion*, Shelley's estimate of Dante's worth was very high. He had formed an acquaintance with the poet of the *Divine Comedy* late in 1817 and there was a corner of the Milan Cathedral to which during the following spring, he used to retire with a copy of Dante. For the summer of 1819 he and Mary read a number of *Cantos* together. In 1820 he translated a canzone from the *Convivio*, and in the early months of 1821, while the *Epipsychidion* was being composed, the Shelleys read the *Vita Nuova*... Shelley's own *Vita Nuova* was probably though not certainly composed during the first six weeks of 1821 and the manuscript was sent off to Charles Olliver on February 16 to be issued without the author's name... Shelley's insistence on the abstruseness of the poem's essential doctrine, its esoteric nature, its purity and sweetness which "the 'vulgar' could easily corrupt through misunderstanding, is especially noteworthy in view of the remarks he was shortly to make about Dante in *A Defence of Poetry*. Shelley wished the poem to be accepted and read as a 'mystery'. It is as 'an explorer of the mysteries of love' that Dante is praised in the *Defence*, where we are told that he "understood the secret things of love even more than Petrarch", and where the *Vita Nuova* is called "an in-exhaustible fountain of purity and sentiment and language". There also the *Paradiso* is said to be "a perpetual hymn of everlasting love"; Dante's "apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme cause", seem to Shelley "the most glorious imagination of modern poetry".<sup>25</sup>

## V

The anomaly in Shelley's aesthetics has been summed up neatly by Hough. "In Shelley's philosophical system there is always a gap between the wretched actuality and radiant and possible ideal. In some of his expository prose writing, he is prepared to fill it laboriously by the methods of patient reformism. But his imagination was more impatient: the gap must be bridged by a spark, and the spark is to be poetry. Poetry becomes the instrument of redemption; it invades the territory of faith and sets up a succession of short-lived governments."<sup>26</sup> Hough emphasises the natural corollary of Shelleyan Platonism, defended by the most respectable and traditional exposition by a complete generation of critics of the romantic period (vide sec. iii). The corollary is the discovery of "the gap between the wretched actuality and the radiant and possible ideal" and the gap must be bridged by a spark. But if Shelley's interest in Dante (vide sec. iv) be any clue, there is no gap between the Ideal and the real. Shelleyan vision and attitude to poetry is not Platonic, but distinctly apocalyptic.

This interpretation of Shelleyan aesthetics falls into several natural divisions. First, for all his aestheticism, Shelley was a life-long admirer of the Bible. Secondly, if Shelley had been a Platonist or Neo-Platonist of any denomination, his powerful satirical outlook in *Mask of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell*, and *Triumph of Life* remains completely unexplained. Shelley's interest in Pope<sup>27</sup> is part of this generally sceptical, satirical bent of mind. But this is hardly compatible with the traditional view of Shelleyan Platonic romanticism. If Shelley had been interested in Pope, his interest in Dryden has been more pervasive. C. S. Lewis long ago discovered Shelley's indebtedness to Dante. "If any passage in our poetry has profited by Dante, it is the unforgettable appearance of Rousseau in that poem—though admittedly it is only the Dante of the *Inferno*. But I am not without hope that Mr. Eliot might be induced to include more. In this same essay he speaks of a modern prejudice against beatitude as material for poetry. (Selected Essays 1932, p. 250). Now Dante is eminently the poet of beatitude. He has not only no rival, but none second to him. But if we were asked to name the poet who most nearly deserved this inaccessible proximo accessil, I should name Shelley."<sup>28</sup> If Shelley had been a close student of Dante (vide Sec. IV) his "radiant and possible ideal" is not the Platonic Ideal, but one of Dantesque beatitudes. This explains why Shelley could defend Intellectual Beauty of the Hymn, Liberty of his Ode, the "Great Spirit"

of Love, the "One" in Adonais, the Spirit of Nature in Queen Mab, the Vision of Alastor and Epipsychidion—not because all these are "absolutely the same thing" (vide sec. III) different names of Platonic Idea, but different forms of Christian beatitudes.

The thesis that Shelley is an atheist has been questioned by many, including King-Hale and Carlos Baker. "Judging Christ as a man and as a moralist, not as a divinity, Shelley finds him a shining example of Godwinian virtue, so much so that the New Testament soon became his favourite reading."<sup>29</sup> Again, "Shelley thought Socratic and Christian ethics had much in common, and he approved, in the main, of both, while regretting that Christ's teaching had been perverted by Churchmen and theologians."<sup>30</sup> Carlos Baker comes to a similar conclusion. "It was not so much that he (Shelley) disliked the ethical thought of Jésus Christ, which as a youth he had not understood, though he came later to a profound admiration for it. It was rather that for his opinion the whole teaching of Christianity had been utterly perverted and falsified by successive generations of theologians." Socratic metaphysics and Christian theology are basically different (vide sec. III). The Platonic-Socratic metaphysics turns it back on the perverse world of actuality. Christian theology takes note of both the world of perversions and the beatific vision. The poet of millenary vision first comes out with bitter denunciations against the abuses, perversions practised in the name of Christ. To this phase of thought belongs Shelleyan powerful satire in *Mask of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell* and *Triumph of Life*. If Shelley belongs to the satirical tradition of Dryden and Pope, it is because all three had been inspired by the apocalyptic vision. In the pursuit of this vision, Shelley went beyond the Augustans, and was nearer to Elizabethan romantic comedy, with the fine balance between romantic love and wholesome, sometimes satirical laughter. The beatific vision itself came to Shelley through hundred ways, not the least of which is the Dantesque vision of the Paradise.

'Prometheus Unbound' closes with  
to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;  
Neither to change, nor fatter, nor repent ;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory (IV. 575-78)

How close is Shelley's attitude to Hope to Dante's vision will be clear from the following passage in Paradiso.

"Hope", said I  
 "Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,  
 The effect of grace divine and merit preceding,  
 This light from many a star, visits my heart ;  
 But flow'd to me, the first, from him who sang  
 The songs of the Supreme ; himself supreme  
 Among his tuneful brethren, "Let all hope  
 In thee", so spake his anthem, "who have known  
 Thy name", and with my faith, "who know not that ?"<sup>32</sup>

Dante gives the definition (of Hope) of Peter the Lombard : Hope is the certain expectation of future beatitude, coming from the grace of God and from precedent merits ; that is, from the grace of God and man's correspondence with that grace by good works ; "for to hope for anything without merits should not be called hope, but presumption."<sup>33</sup> The object of Hope is eternal beatitude, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body to share in that immortality, as shown by Isaiah (LXI.7.10) and St. John (Revelations VII.9). The beatific vision itself is referred to throughout the Paradise, particularly in Cantos IV, VIII, IX, and XXII. It remains for us only to work out the synthesis arrived at by Shelley between the satirical vision and the millenary outlook, both inspired by his reading of Dante.

## VI

Wasserman in his analysis of Shelley's last poetics concedes that Shelley was not much interested in the Platonic ideal Form, as he had been in the Platonic demiurge. As already noted, the Platonic demiurge is the nearest approximation to the creative God of the Genesis [vide Sec. II]. The importance of this unplatonic background of Shelley's poetics, was hinted at, though not openly advocated by contemporary reviewers of Shelley's poetry. These contemporary reviewers give us a much more accurate idea of the truth about Shelley's poetic imagination. An unknown reviewer writes in *British Review* (XVII June 1821, pp. 380-89) on the *Cenci*, "This passage (IV.1.78-111) exemplifies the furious exaggeration of Mr. Shelley's caricatures, as well as of the strange mode in which throughout the whole play, religious thoughts and atrocious deeds are brought together.....In the intermixture of things, sacred and impure, Mr. Shelley is not inconsistent if he believes that religion is in Protestant countries hypocrisy, and that it is in Roman Catholic countries

"adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration ; not a rule for moral conduct, and that it has no necessary connexion with any one virtue."<sup>34</sup> Earlier, the same reviewer writes, "Cenci makes an open confession to a cardinal of a supreme love of everything bad merely for its own sake.....In the fourth (act) he again comes before us, expressing no passion, no desire, but pure abstract depravity and impiety."<sup>35</sup> The Quarterly Review is equally critical, but emphasises once again Shelley's love of the unintelligible, disgusting and the impious. "Sometimes Mr. Shelley's love of the unintelligible yields to his preference for the disgusting and impious.....The following comparison of a poet to aameleon has no more meaning than the jingling of the bells of a fool's cap, and far less music..... sometimes to the charms of nonsense those of doggerel are added."<sup>36</sup> Shelley's love of paradox has been noted by most of his reviewers. A contemporary reviewer writes in Monthly Magazine (June 1821) on Queen Mab, "The Author before us does indeed, endeavour to astonish, by the extravagance of his paradoxes and the incongruity of his metaphors ; .....It is a continuous declamation without either rhyme or reason", and the speaker may pause where he will without injury to the sense or interruption to the monotonous flow of harangue."<sup>37</sup> Bradley, Solve, Wasserman among the earlier group of critics, and Abrams, King-Hale and Carlos Baker among the later, have missed the implications of contemporary reviews of Shelley's poetry and aesthetics. Both groups have ignored Shelley's love of paradox and non-sense, his attachment to "pure abstract depravity and impiety." A responsible reconstruction of Shelleyan aesthetic's must take note of this element along with his philosophical attitude to Love, Beauty and the prophetic, the millenary vision.

Shelley's "Sonnet : Political Greatness" contains, perhaps the most complete declaration of his faith :

Man who man would be  
Must rule the empire of himself : in it  
Must be supreme, establishing his throne  
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy  
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.<sup>38</sup>

Shelley, as Milton Wilson has shown, attempted throughout his life to get free of the burr of self, to project his values outside himself in benevolent identification with others ; he upheld his ideal in spite of personal defeats and disappointments, and that he, like other mortals, failed to achieve complete selflessness, should not blind one to either the nobility of the attempt or the considerable measure of his success. In



Shelley's writings "Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world."<sup>39</sup> This love, the self-giving agape of the New Testament, must rule in a man's heart if he is to achieve his true humanity :

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,  
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites  
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,  
Is as a tempest-winged ship, whose helm  
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,  
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.<sup>40</sup>

The New Testament "agape" is an un-Platonic, non-intellectual attitude to love. The Rousseau of *The Triumph of Life* had reached the point in his life story at which he would begin to feel the redeeming force of the love that had merely destroyed him. Shelley recognised the danger of pursuing the Ideal ; as he wrote to John Gisborne : "I think one is always in love with something or other ; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal" (Julian ed. vol. X. 401). The problem for Shelley, as for all idealists, was to maintain his vision of the Ideal while living affectionately within the limitations of the sublunary actual world. This is not Platonic. Abrams interprets this as a form of "literary Manichaenism—secular visions of the radical contemptus mundi et vitae of heretical Christian dualism—whose manifestations in literature extend back through Mallarmé and other French Symbolists to Rimbaud and Baudelaire.....Throughout Shelley's poetry there is a "fundamental contradiction "between" the tone of affirmation" and the underlying truth of his "renunciation of the world and society" ;<sup>41</sup> even the conclusion of *Prometheus Unbound* under its surface assurance, expresses "a morbid antipathy and revulsion against society in any form.....an indifference to, even a dislike of human beings" in the concrete".<sup>42</sup> Abrams and Bostetter chose to represent Shelley as a Neo-Platonic Manichae and completely disregarded the materials noted not merely by Shelley's contemporary reviewers but also his life-long interest in Dante. Abram's analysis of Shelley's vision as hovering between hope and dejection (chapter Eight. Sec. 6) is a distortion of the Dantesque journey from Purgatorio to Paradiso. The three journeys described by Abrams in chapter III (Pilgrims and Prodigals) in chapter IV (Through Alienation to Reintegration) and in chapter V (From Blake to D. H. Laurence) are all "circuitous journey" : all forms of Pagan and Christian Neo-Platonism.<sup>43</sup> The "circuitous journey" is

distinctively pagan with little or no Christian overtone. This explains further why in Abram's analysis of "Forms of Romantic Imagination", Neo-Platonism occupies an important place.<sup>44</sup> Such a state of mind provided, perhaps the motivation for Shelley's final poetic effort. But ideas, according to Shelley's poetic theory do not become poetry until they are clothed in memorable images and harmonious Ideal, but more accurately, the Idea, the word becoming the flesh of memorable images and harmonious sound. Love is not merely "the sole law which should govern the moral law", but agape which holds together sound and meaning, body and soul, the word and the flesh.

## VII

It is conceivable that a re-interpretation of Shelley's aesthetics on the basis of his beliefs, political (vide sec II.), religious (vide sec III.) and social (vide sec IV.) as also of his wide-ranging interest in classical and Christian literature is possible. In other words, an interpretation of the Shelleyan aestheticism on the basis of his translation of Plato's *Ion*, his *Defence of Poetry*, and his major poetry including the *Hellas*, *Promethens Unbound*, the *Daemon of the world*, *Mont Blanc* is possible. Wasserman's reconstruction suffers from its exclusive dependence on the *Ion*.

Mario Praz pointed out many years ago the beauty of the Horrid, the Beauty of Sadness, Beauty and Death as elements of romanticism. He devotes the first chapter of his great book to the analysis of the "Beauty of the Medusa". "No picture made a deeper impression on the mind of Shelley than the Medusa, at one time attributed to Leonardo, and now to an unknown Flemish artist, which he saw in the Uffizi Gallery towards the end of 1819. The poem which he wrote upon it deserves to be quoted in full, since it amounts to a manifesto of the conception of Beauty peculiar to the Romantics.

"...                    ...                    ...  
...                    ...                    ...

'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror ;

For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare

Kindled by that inextricable error,

Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air

...                    ...                    ...  
...                    ...                    ...

A woman's countenance, with serpent-locks,

Gazing in death on Heaven from those wet rocks,

"Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror...' In these lines pleasure and pain are combined in one single impression."<sup>45</sup> Praz carefully reconstructs the aesthetic theory of the Horrid and the Terrible which had gradually developed during the course of the eighteenth century as the basis of Shelley's poem.

Hairs which are vipers, and thy curl and flow  
And their long tangles in each other lock,  
And with unending involutions show  
Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock  
The torture and the death within, and saw  
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.

Curiously the Oxford edition of Shelley's Complete Poems has a Fragment : "Wake the Serpent Not" soon after the poem on the Medusa.

Is it the Romantic interest in the Horrid and the Terrible, which will explain Shelley's picture of the Medusa ? "The Daemon of the World" published in 1816 is an early work.

Majestic spirit, be it thine  
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,  
Where the vast snake Eternity  
In charmed sleep doth even lie (lines 98-101)

Earlier the chariot is described :

Floating on waves of music and of light :  
The chariot of the Daemon of the world  
Descends in silent power (lines 56-8)

What is even more interesting the chariot, unlike the chariot in Plato's *Ion*, does not ascend, but actually descends. The chariot itself is drawn by

Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful  
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light  
Check their unearthly speed ; they stop and fold  
Their wings of braided air (lines 64-7)

How superficial and misleading is the Platonic parallel will be made clear when it is remembered that the chariot in *Ion* is drawn by a pair of horses, while the chariot of the Daemon is unmistakably drawn by "four shapeless shadows". "The Daemon of the World" anticipates the twin directions towards which Shelley's aesthetics had already been developing, (a) his interest in the Medusan serpent and (b) his interest in the descending chariot drawn by *four* horses.

Mont Blanc (July. 1816) has not received its proper place in the interpretation of Shelley's aesthetics, presumably because it has been interpreted as a nature poem. Mont Blanc (Sec. III) begin,

Some say that gleams of a remoter world  
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber  
... ..  
Spread far around and inaccessibly  
Its circles ?

Immediately after Shelley comes to the mountain :

... .. how hideously  
Its shapes are heaped around ! rude, bare and high  
Ghastly, and scarred and riven,—Is this the scene  
Where the old Earthquake daemon taught her young  
Ruin ? (lines 69-73)

It is the earthquake daemon now in place of the Daemon of the World. But the snakes are not far away, and not difficult to find

... .. the glaciers creep  
Like snakes that watch their pray, from their far fountains  
Slow rolling on

Floyd Stovall in his analysis of Shelley's Hymn to Intellectual Beauty concedes that Love, Beauty, Spirit of the Universe, all refer to the same being. "Shelley did not accept the Pagan doctrine of multiple Gods, but he might think of this Daemon as the Spirit through whom man may be led to an understanding of the immutable laws of the universe. The Daemon of the World, or the Spirit of Love, becomes in a sense the interpreter of inscrutable Necessity, and stands to Shelley in the same relation that Christ stands to the Christians. Cythna's invocation to Love, pronounced 'from the Atlas of the Federation that was raised for the celebration of Ottoman's fall, contains further evidence that the various names employed by Shelley—Love, Spirit of Beauty, Spirit of the Universe, and Mother of the World—all refer to the same being.<sup>46</sup> All these definitely refer to the same being; but what is it? Not the Platonic Idea, but its very negation. The Mother of the World is the matrix, the primary matter, the Samkhyan Prakriti, the basis of all creation. This is the Medusa, the Mont Blanc, the snake associated with the primary matter both in Greek and Hindu Philosophy. (vide see. v).

The advocates of Shelleyan Platonism are confounded when they come to Shelley's interest in Dryden, and satirical poetry of the

eighteenth century.<sup>47</sup> How can an ardent Platonic idealist be interested in satirical poetry, which is, critically speaking, lowly.<sup>48</sup> It is of interest to note that Shelley's model is not Popean satire, but Dryden's more spacious world. In other words, Dryden combined the ideal as an inseparable element of the lowly which Pope did not. Technically speaking, the heroic satire of Dryden fulfilled Shelley's poetic idea, while Popean satire, at best, gave the vision of a world, fragmented and gone awry. It must be remembered that this vision, which is as much ideal as real, and often the two together, approximates more correctly to Shelley's attitude to poetry. This explains how Shelley could define poetry as "at once the centre and circumference of knowledge ; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time, the root and blossom of all other systems of thought ; it is that from which all spring and that which adorns all ; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world, the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life."<sup>49</sup> "The centre and circumference of knowledge" is how Shelley describes the entire range of knowledge, lowly and high, sacred and profane, emotional as also intellectual.

A recent reconstruction of romantic aesthetics makes extensive use of Shelley. "We have found, then, that the metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to move inside and outward inside of outside and upward ; hence the creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the presence of God. Blake's Orc and Shelley's Prometheus are Titans imprisoned underneath experience ; the Garden of Adonis are down in Endymion, when as they are up in the Faerie Queene and Comus : in Prometheus Unbound everything that aids mankind comes from below, associated with volcanoes and fountains. In the Revolt of Islam there is a curious collision with an older habit of metaphor when Shelley speaks of

A power, a thirst, a knowledge ... .. below  
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere

The Kubla Khan geography of caves and underground streams haunts all of Shelley's language about creative processes : in "Speculation on Metaphysics," for instance, he says : "But thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards. The caverns of the mind are obscure and shadowy, or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals."<sup>50</sup> The title of Frye's brilliant essay, the *Drunken Boat* refers to "the geography of caves and under-

ground streams." This is a natural outcome, according to Frye, of the change in the Romantic aesthetic perspective, "If a Romantic poet, therefore, wishes to write of God, he has more difficulty in finding a place to put him than Dante or even Milton had, and on the whole he prefers to do without a place, or finds "within" metaphors more re-assuring than "up there" metaphors."<sup>51</sup> But Frye does not explain the romantic choice of either the "light" symbol referred to by Shelley, or the "underground streams" symbol used by Shelley. This second symbol has been used again in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. "...Poetry...arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life.....because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things.....is secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life."<sup>52</sup>

"The Drunken Boat," the "Daemon of the World," the Medusan snake, the underground stream are not essentially different. "The poisonous waters which flow from death through life" are as much the waters of forgetfulness, of Lethe, oblivion and death, as also the waters of life, of spiritual enlightenment. Again, "a great poem is a fountain for ever flowing with the waters of wisdom and delight."<sup>53</sup> Great poetry is rooted in and draws its sustenance from this "underground stream," this subconscious. It is for this that "poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will,...the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of the approach or its departure."<sup>54</sup> But if poetry be unconscious, uncontrolled by reason or will in its origin, what about its essential characters, its end and purpose? Poetry is essentially rational in its structure and organisation. "Hence the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence, than the words themselves, without reference to that peculiar order, Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wide to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to translate form one language into another the creations of a poet."<sup>55</sup> In its uniqueness of form poetry in Shelley's analysis, is eminently rational. Rooted in the unconscious, in the instinctive, in the underground stream. poetry yet is "the flower and the fruit of latest time."<sup>56</sup> Poetry combines reason and instinct, the conscious and the unconscious; "it is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science."<sup>57</sup>

Shelley's attitude to beauty is not Platonic, but Medusan; his attitude to love is once again, not Neo-Platonic, but as noted by Reiman<sup>58</sup>

inspired by the Christian doctrine of "agape." The chariot in *Prometheus Unbound*<sup>60</sup> and *Hellas*<sup>60</sup> is identical with "the drunken boat," the first drawn by the apocalyptic horses (not the Platonic horses in the *Phaedrus*), the second driven on the dark subterranean stream of the Unconscious. This brings us to the images of light<sup>61</sup> and the prophetic character of much of Shelley's later poetry. It would be wrong to associate this prophetic character of *Hellas*.<sup>62</sup> The *West Wind*<sup>63</sup> and *Prometheus Unbound*<sup>64</sup> with Shelley's interest in the French Revolution as the first decisive step towards the millennium. Both Abrams and Frye believe in the political and social bases of Shelley's poetic theory. These bases are not denied: but these are "the circumference" and not "the centre" of knowledge in Shelley's analysis. In combining the spontaneous origin of poetry with the most developed form of intellectualism, in attributing to the poet the gift of prophecy, Shelley was moving towards a deeply cherished belief of the primitive church: this is the gift of tongues, one of the charismatic gift of the primitive church. St. Luke relates that on the feast of Pentecost following the Ascension of Christ into heaven one hundred and twenty disciples of Galilean origin were heard speaking "with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak."<sup>65</sup> The distinction of 'tongues' was largely one of dialects and the cause of astonishment was that so many of them should be heard simultaneously and from Galileans, whose linguistic capacities were presumably underrated. It was the Holy Ghost who impelled the disciples "to speak," without perhaps being obliged to infuse a knowledge of tongues unknown. The physical and psychic condition of the audition was one of ecstasy and rapture in which "the wonderful things of God" would naturally find utterance in acclamations, prayers or hymns.<sup>66</sup> This gift of tongues has been traced to even secular prophets, who are not necessarily Catholics.<sup>67</sup> Poetry is rooted in the subconscious; it is the fine flowering of rational faculty; it is prophetic, ecstatic or enthusiastic. This should be a fair analysis of Shelleyan aesthetics.

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## ERRATA

<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
P. 1, line 16 : <i>Selected Poem</i>	<i>Selected Poems</i>
P. 3, line 23 : a makes	makes
P. 6, line 15 (from bottom) : sricltly	strictly
P. 6, line 5 (from bottom) : passage	passages
P. 8, line 22 : <i>Georgica</i>	<i>Georgics</i>
P. 10, line 12 : that is	that it is
P. 13, line 15 (from bottom) : verabally	verbally
P. 14, line 11 : "imagiste"	"imagist"
P. 48, line 12 (from bottom) : absorved	absorbed
P. 52, line 8 (from bottom) : function	functions
P. 55, last line : ust	not just
P. 56, line 5 : Can	can
P. 59, last line : speakes	speaks
P. 60, line 10 : speakes	speaks
P. 60, line 6 (from bottom) : feeling	feelings
P. 63, line 3 : discussion on	discussion of 'katharsis'
P. 64, line 5 : obesiance	obeisance
P. 64, line 9 : satisffed	satisfied
P. 66, line 8 : Dickens	Dickens,
P. 72, line 14 (from bottom) : descring	describing
P. 72, line 2 (from bottom) : froward	forward
P. 73, line 4 : Individual	Individuals
P. 77, line 10 (from bottom) : dark narraw	dark, narrow
P. 77, line 5 (from bottom) : clustrophobic	claustrophobic
P. 80, line 13 (from bottom) : Diekens	Dickens
P. 81, line 10 : Dosttoevsky's	Dostoevsky's

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**THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN EDITED BY**  
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DILIP KUMAR MUKHERJEE

This collection of essays is our humble tribute to Prof. Krishna Chandra Lahiri, formerly Reader and Head of the Department of English, University of Calcutta, whose retirement in 1976 has left a void which can hardly be filled up. 'A *whole* man in a procession of broken human figures'—this is how students described him when they bid farewell to him, and his pupils and colleagues know how apposite the image is. A colleague appropriately described him on the same occasion as 'a Bengalee to the tips of his fingers'. Yet he is never provincial; he has a breadth of vision that can accommodate and appreciate contrary attitudes and values. As a teacher he never felt the 'generation gap' that distorts relationships on the human plane. And at the heart of the man there is a love and understanding of poetry that we meet but seldom.

It is a particularly fitting occasion to recall Prof. Lahiri's long and valued association with this literary journal on which he bestowed much loving care, and it is of the grace of things that this volume should be presented to a teacher and colleague who represents, in this 'dismal and illiberal age', the values that we associate with humanistic culture.

Dipendu Chakrabarti

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## MYSTERY, ROMANCE AND REALISM IN SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

---

JHARNA SANYAL

The sound of the battle gear of the war-fields and the cry of the curlew over the clasp waves, are faithful reproductions of the Anglo-Saxon poet's keen awareness of the pressing realities of life. These things were so much a part of his existence that the poet's eye saw the immediate surroundings as threatening his survival, and the pervading atmosphere, being so hostile, was more or less inimical to the spirit of romance for so many reasons.

The attitudes changed in the Middle ages, which discarded the Epic for the Romance: an omnibus terminology in medieval English to include anything which might appear to be a "good story." It has to be admitted that the exclusive court-culture which is so essential a part of the Romance literature is more or less a French import and England perhaps never possessed a confined court society whose activities might have spurred the Romance literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The knights with whom the English audience were acquainted were the more mundane administrators of society—even with the possibility of condescending to join a Canterbury pilgrimage with a miller or a reeve. Thus the world of the court and chivalry, of adventures and perils, presented by the romance-writers, was but one remove from the contemporary reality. It is a world that possibly once were but no longer is. It is the world where dreams come true, insuperable difficulties are surmounted by the one man who stands victorious after a succession of some series of adventures. So the world is to that degree removed from the everyday actuality, to that extent different from the recognizable present that they develop a 'fairy-tale' like 'if-it-were' realism.

The old English poems—heroic or elegiac, *Beowulf* or *Deor's Lament*, are the impressions, the lexical reproductions, of a poet's reaction towards a life, of which he himself and his audience were a part. The bleak atmosphere, the fear of invasions, and the threat of annihilation—all these pressed reality so close that it could not be glossed over. So

most of the old English poems cannot but reproduce an image of the actual life seen and felt by both the poet and his audience. In the Middle ages, this pressure dissolves due to so many factors and the poets can now afford to lean back comfortably on contemporary reality and indulge in the romantic world "of eldirs that before us were", or in those legends, "As scribes have set it duly

In the lore of the land so long,  
With letters linking truly  
In story bold and strong."

But this remoteness from reality does not necessarily ensure the "romantic" nature of these romances, which portray the characters in supernatural dimensions ; the situations are improbably difficult, yet won over, and the scenes dazzlingly brilliant and perfect. Imagination lends little charm to these pre-conceived, accepted figures and scenes which are made credible by virtue of their supposed antiquity. There is open and emphatic declaration that the poem will be of a land

Where war and feud and wonder  
Have ruled the realm a Space  
.....  
Here many a marvel, more than in other lands  
Has befallen by fortune since that far time.

This introduction diminishes the task of the poet, who no longer needs to build the atmosphere of mystery and marvel since its credibility has been taken as axiomatic. This suspension of disbelief is not the resultant of any imaginative verisimilitude. The traditional romance subject matter deceptively lacks that property of imagination which makes a poet see—

Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

This imaginative credibility which is independent of any land and time is absent in the medieval romances. Even the Gawain-poet, in pursuance of the generic canon, establishes his poem against the background of history, with reference to Troy, Aeneas, Romulus, Sicius, Brutus, and others. It gradually narrows down to Britain and finally to King Arthur's court.

In a mystery poem like *The Listeners*—there is a plasticity of time and place. The night, the forest, the lonely traveller, all these have no discriminating credentials by virtue of which they can be located in a particular period of history. The message that reverberates through

that dark forest—"Tell them that I kept my word" might have been uttered anywhere and at any time. The essential vagueness or suggestiveness which lends so much to the myterious effect of such poems is absent in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where at the very outset the audience are prepared for a wonder, in a manner quite reminiscent of the drumbeater in a fair, gathering a crowd for a magic show.

So I intend to tell you of a true *wonder*  
Which many folk mention as a manifest *marvel*,  
A happening eminent among Arthur's *adventures*.

The gorgeous setting is laid out minutely so that it reflects the myriad effects of colour and sound.

Then lords and ladies leaped forth, largesse distributing  
... ..  
Ladies laughed full loudly.....  
With glorious Guinever.....  
On the princely platform with its precious hangings  
Of rich tapestry of Toulouse and Turkestan  
Brilliantly embroidered with the best gems.

This setting, as the rendezvous of the marvellous appearance, is to be set against the few introductory lines of *Christabel*.

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock ;  
Tu—whit !—Tu—whoo !  
And hark, again ! the crowing cock,  
How drowsily it crew.

The Gawain-poet rejects all such common clap-trap creating a mysterious back-cloth at the background of which a deer appears a dragon. The poet's preference for such little mundane details of real life is once more present in his description of the interior decoration of Bertilack's castle :

The bed-curtains of brilliant silk with bright gold hems,  
Had skilfully-sewn coverlets with comely facings,  
And the fairest fur on the fringes was worked,  
With ruddy gold rings on the cords ran the curtains ;  
Toulouse and Turkestan tapestries on the wall  
And fine carpets under foot, on the floor,

were fittingly matched.

The description of the hunting scenes, the architectonics of Bertilak's castle and similar others go to attest the fact that the Gawain-poet would



not opt for any vague, half-way suggestion though they might have helped in fading out the known bounds of reality and thus transform the known world into a world of shadows. In the midst of such luxurious grandeur, such sumptuous feast, where

Twelve plates were for every pair,  
Good beer and bright wine both

—a green knight on a green horse gallops to the vision of the court multitude,—expectation is fulfilled. This immediate satisfaction of expectancy robs the happening of the sudden shock of surprise which this onslaught on the known world should have caused. He has been deemed “a phantom from the faery land” and the very identification suggests its unfamiliarity, not its improbability. He is strange yet recognizable :

When there heaved in at the hall door an awesome fellow  
Who in height outstripped all earthly men.  
From throat to thigh he was so thickset and square,  
His loins and limbs were so long and so great,  
Yet mainly and most of all a man he seemed,  
..... ..  
And the handsomest of horsemen, though huge at that.  
For though at back and at breast his body was broad,  
His hips and haunches were elegant and small.  
And perfectly proportioned were all parts of the man,  
... ..

Another recognizable figure has also been described by Coleridge—

There she sees a damsel bright,  
Drest in a silken robe of white,  
That shadowy in the moonlight shone :  
The neck that made the white robe wan,  
Her stately neck, and arms were bare ;  
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,  
And wildly glittered here and there  
The gems entangled in her hair.

But the shadowy moonlight, the white robe, the glittering gems against the darkness, the lone figure of Christabel at such a place and time spread over the recognizable world a thin veil of mystery that makes the reader wary. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of the vision is obvious in Christabel's utterance :

‘Mary Mother save me now !’  
(Said Chirstabel,) ‘And who art thou ?’

Gawain too invokes Mary, much later.

And he that eventide  
To Mary made his moan,  
And begged her be his guide  
Till some shelter should be shown.

But at the court, Arthur's first address to the appearance—"Sir Knight...," immediately familiarises him as a part of the courtly reality. So what had been the appearance of a phantom from faeryland is localised as a super-size green-hued knight, and the poet employs detailed description to lend credibility to his human credentials. What is achieved by these processes is not the negative suspension of disbelief but a positive recognition of wonder, on the part of the poet's audience. Keeping up with the spirit of the festive occasion he too has come, not as a menace, but to add another item to the 'Christman gomen,' to extend the invitation for a "blow for a blow." The marvellous reaches its climax when the green knight picks up his severed head :

Holding his head in his hand by the hair  
And surprisingly still, it lifted its eyelids and looked glaringly,  
And menacingly said with its mouth as you may now hear ;  
Be prepared to perform what you promised, Gawain ;...

The facade of reality or credibility which the Gawain-poet had built up so deliberately and so carefully that the green appearance might have a name in terms of real life, collapses and thus enhances the inherent element of the mystery, the imposing uncertainty and the initial human fear of the unknown.

The nature of the testing element being established, the poet, with his superb skill of structural architectonics proceeds to introduce the factor to be tested. Sir Gawain, who is the nephew of King Arthur, as he is introduced by the poet, introduces himself characteristically by volunteering to accept the challenge of the green knight. The poet furnishes a complete assessment of the man who is both physically and morally armed with his battle gear—his shield and its pentangle, his five wits, so that the audience are assured that it is one of the most perfect of knights who is proceeding towards the decapitating operation.

The dazzle and brilliance of the court and its multitude, of which Gawain is a constituent part, is now replaced by bleak nature, dull and colourless and Gawain is in isolation till he reaches a castle. Once

more the characteristic details furnished by the Gawain poet leave no room for uncanny apprehensions. It is a recognisable situation again—

“So many painted pinnacles sprinkled everywhere,

That it appeared like a prospect of paper patterning”—and if ‘paper-patterning’ here refers to the table-decoration so common in the middle-ages, then no description can be more cognizable to the audience. The rustle of hooves and horses, the swirl of men and manners reappear and Gawain finds himself in the known comforts of beautiful “room where the bedding was noble” and where

Several fine soups, seasoned lavishly  
Twice-fold, as is fitting, and fish of all kinds—  
Some baked in bread, some browned on coals,  
Some seethed, some stewed and savoured with spice.

The fear and haunting uncertainty of the previous scene dissolves “at the chimney hearth where charcoal burned.” It is quite a domestic castle interior etched out in the minutest details of cushions, chairs, fur, ermine and such other contemporary luxuries quite familiar to the audience though the knight and his peers belong to a remoter world. Gawain extends something more than court-chivalry to the “Most beautiful of body and bright of complexion”—and

Gawain advances gaily and goes there quickly,  
But the lord gripped his gown and guided him to his seat.

The threat of the green knight seems to be an illusion of the past. In such an atmosphere of relaxation another tryst is made very casually, it will be an exchange of gifts. No doubt, in pursuance of the first tryst Gawain reaches for the second, which apparently does not involve any danger. There is nothing uncanny or eerie about the treaty of the genial host. The hunting scenes are drawn with characteristic details.

Then they beat upon the bushes and bade him come out,  
And he swung out savagely aslant the line of men,  
A baneful boar of unbelievable size,  
A solitary long since sundered from the herd,  
Being old and brawny, the biggest of them all.

Such pictures from the contemporary scene were quite familiar to the fourteenth-century audience who might have also been able to associate them with the parallel bed-chamber scenes which once more testify to the poet’s ease with narration and with real-life description—

The lovely lady advanced, laughing adorably,  
Swooped over his splendid face and sweetly kissed him  
He welcomed her worthily with noble cheer  
And, gazing on her gay and glorious attire,  
Her features so faultless and fine of complexion,  
He felt a flush of rapture suffuse his heart.

Such scenes of temptations were a legacy from the age-old times which Gawain, by virtue of his position in the poem, and in keeping with the romance tradition, was expected to recognize and overcome. The Gawain poet introduces a scheme of double obligation in the age-worn problem—

He was concerned for his courtesy, lest he be called caitiff.  
But more especially for his evil plight into sin,  
And dishonour the owner of the house treacherously—

and possibly chivalry is offended as the lady says—

Blame will be yours  
If you love not the living body lying close to you.

Gawain, balancing carefully on the razor's edge of courtly courtesy and Christian chastity, withstands the provocations of the lady, who finally withdraws with a humble extension of appreciation, "a girdle of green silk with golden hem," endowed with the special life-saving capacity. The knight, the pride of King Arthur's court, fortified with his five wits, who dared a blow to the green Knight and resisted the temptation of alluring flesh at nocturnal secrecy, at last succumbs to the basic and animal instinct of self-preservation,—an attribute where he is equal to everyman. The knightly garb is peeled off to reveal the common man born with the fear of self-annihilation. So much had been anticipated and so little is achieved. The poem begins with a severed head and the finale is with Gawain the man, not the insuperable hero of the traditional Romances but the fallible man who proves his universal and primitive human instinct by erring. It is a tremendous achievement for a Romance-writer to construct an iron-fortification with an unusual subterfuge through which the eternal recognizable truth is admitted. No human situation can be more realistic. This was unforeseen, and no mystery poem could have achieved such an effect, exchanging shadows for substance. Yet the commonest truth is wrung out of the recognisable reality through a unique process. The superb sense of realism, the comparative abstinence from supernatural occurrences and adventures,

the familiarization of the unfamiliar—all these are employed in a way unforeseen by his predecessors and contemporaries. The common mystery of phantoms and the romance of fairies transcend their generic limitations as the poem becomes a revelation of human nature, which man preposterously presumes to know so well only to realise what a stranger he is to himself. The Gawain poet delves into this eternal mystery that lurks in the hidden crevices of human nature, through the known alleys of one of the commonest literary forms of the middle ages.

## ORDER AND ANARCHY : THE PROBLEMS OF SATIRE IN BEN JONSON'S COMEDIES

---

SUDESHNA CHAKRAVARTY

Why ? though I seems of a prodigious wast,  
I am not so voluminous, and vast  
But there are lines, whereth I might be embrac'd  
'Tis true, as my wombe swells, so my backe stoupes,  
And the whole lumpe growes round, deform'd and droupes.  
But yet the tun at Heidelberg had houpes.<sup>1</sup>

Jonson's mountain belly and great thirst were famous, but his image of himself as a gargantuan bottle of wine is more than witty ; it is suggestive. It becomes an apt symbol for the basic tension that we feel in his comedies. His strong appetites, his creative and yet potentially anarchic comic imagination are throughout his work in conflict with his classicist's discipline and shaping intelligence. Alvin Kernan has pointed to the amazing density of *things*<sup>2</sup> that we find in Jonson's plays—the "mercury" and "hog's bones" of Mrs. Otter's face, or the hair, resin and guts that form the basis of Clerimont's music. And not only are there inanimate objects— he also rams in countless animal images—the vulture, the raven, the "well-educated ape"<sup>3</sup>. Side by side we have the noisy busy human world—the sprawling metropolis of London, bustling with men of all classes and occupations. This hectic teeming life—the life of an entire city—constitutes the basic material of Jonson's plays. But side by side with the vivid portrayal of this dense mass of life, one is also aware of his unrelenting moral grasp of his material, constantly judging and scrutinising, subjecting it to the play of his ironic wit. His avowed aim is to show the—

times deformitie

Anatomis'd in every nerve and sinnew.<sup>4</sup>

He is witnessing an age of transition—older sanctions and ethical standards are giving way before new cultural forces which seem self-sufficiently exclusive of any influence from traditional morality. He is excited by these new energies, but he is also the greatest classicist of his day,

deeply committed to values of tradition in religion, politics and art—the satirist who constantly measures the world around him against a supra-real world of harmony and perfection, and castigates it for not measuring up to his ideals. We will find that his moralising zeal gradually becomes mellowed into an acceptance of life as it is, with all its imperfections, as he gradually becomes aware of the unbridgeable gap between his ideals and reality. But the tension between ideal and intractable actuality remains central in his comedies. At their best his comedies are neither pure satire nor pure saturnalia. If they do not entirely fit the satiric formula of judgement and correction, nor do they follow the festive pattern of a joyous triumph of vitality and reality in which the perverted elements are salvaged and included in a brave new world.

The tensions which come to the fore in the major comedies are only latent in the early plays, but they are unmistakably present. In these plays the pattern is still that of conventional satiric comedy. The follies of the characters are judged as aberrations from the accepted norms of good behaviour and sound sense—absolute values which are unquestioningly accepted as the bed-rock of an ordered and harmonious society. The fools are finally purged of their delusions and brought safely back into society. The exposure of the “humours” requires the presence of a comic expositor who stands apart, holding the fools up to ridicule and channelling the audience’s response to them. In *Every Man In His Humour* this role is performed by the two gallants Wellbred and Young Knowell, and also by Brainworm, the wily trickster who controls much of the action.

Yet already one finds conflicting energies in the play, threatening to disturb the stability of the satirical structure. Social satire has to evoke the norm whose violation it portrays—but it is difficult to accept Justice Clement who embodies that norm—and reject Bobadil as an outcast. The anti-norm threatens to usurp most of our interest. Jonson attempts to embody his normative vision in Clement—an older man successful in the world of affairs, and admitting the desirability of becoming a “staid man”, but one who is also indulgent to youthful energy and excess and values mirth and wit. He stands as the ethical centre of the play. But although Clement is brought in at the end to act as arbiter and dispense judgement, he remains extraneous to the main action of the play. The integrated normative character remains less interesting than the eccentrics and fools—though Jonson’s strong ethical and moral bias compels him to punish his imaginative characters for

deviating from social conformity. Already we notice the pull between his devotion to the ideals of correction and his bent for pure comedy.

The play ends with the restoration of an ordered society as Clement sorts out the misunderstandings, punishes the malefactors and brings people together. Note the presence of traditional comic motifs—judgement, marriage and feasting. The marriage of Edward Knowell and Mistress Bridget unites the characters in ties of kinship, and Clement himself provides the wedding feast, dedicating the night to “friendship, love and laughter.” Yet this order seems imposed from outside—after all, the laughter in the play comes from Brainworm’s adroit manipulations which create divisions, separating son from father, husband from wife, (in the false messages to Kitley and his wife) master from servant. Brainworm is an incipient Mosca, for he admits that all his talents are devoted to self-aggrandisement. The application of conventional comic motifs at the end seems mechanical—the marriage of Edward and Bridget is too hastily patched up. Jonson’s vision of an ordered society is incompatible with the wayward energies of his comic world. Later his endings will become parodies of conventional comic endings—the traditional festive comic symbols of harmony will be inverted. Thus, banqueting and marriage recur at the end of *The Alchemist*, judgement at the end of *Volpone* and a combination of both in *Bartholomew Fair*. But most of the marriages are frankly utilitarian; the judgement of *Volpone* is dispensed by agents who are themselves corrupt, while in *The Alchemist* the judgement we would expect at the end never comes. The feasting at the end of *The Alchemist* celebrates the success of manipulation, while in *Bartholomew Fair* it marks the recognition of the futility of all judgement, and the inability to amend. In *The Silent Woman* the wedding feast celebrates a non-marriage. The traditional norms break down.

The pull between warring tendencies—at once a passionate commitment to a vision of ideal perfection and a growing recognition of various anarchic energies which resist any moral censure—becomes more evident in the Comical Satyres. In their prologues and inductions we find Jonson preoccupied with the problems of satire. He would clearly like to cast himself in the role of the ideal satirist—the sane detached observer of the manners of the age, untouched by any personal rancour, who “pursues” with a “constant firmnesse” a “meane” according to which he judges the follies of society.<sup>6</sup> And yet the detached, balanced moralist, when dramatised, tends to become the intemperate railer whose anger against the world that has disappointed him is so intense that he would like to destroy it altogether. In *Every Man Out of his Humour* Macilente stands at the



critical centre of the play and it is around him that the principal contradictions of Jonson's social consciousness at this stage centre. It is doubtful whether Macilente's vituperative criticism is "much too extravagant to be accepted as the expression of Jonson's moral intelligence."<sup>6</sup> Macilente appears to be less a self-complete dramatic character than a spokesman for Jonson's own views. His presence in the play disrupts the creative expression which had gone into the creation of Carlo Buffone. Without Macilente the play would have divided between a lively comic response to urban wit (in Carlo) and an amusing comedy at the expense of foppery. But we are asked to react to such follies with moral outrage. Macilente sees these characters as "monstrous prodigies"<sup>7</sup> and his function is to prevent any comic sympathy with them. He paints their follies as crimes, their antics as vices. His joyless cruelty distorts the play's life that Jonson's imagination evokes. He prevents Carlo, undoubtedly the play's finest achievement, from being fully activated, warding off the energies that without his presence would be more a subject for celebration than stricture.

In *The Poetaster* we find that violently warring opposing energies pull the work askew, so that it loses dramatic coherence. The court of Augustus embodies a vision of ideal order against which all aberrations must be judged. Augustus is the ideal ruler, who with the help of the true poets works to preserve the harmony of the commonwealth :

Happy is Rome of all earths other states  
To have so true, and great a president,  
For here inferiour spirits to imitate,  
As Caesar is...<sup>8</sup>

Poets contribute to this image of order, for poets are the "learned heads" which the enlightened emperor had decided to "advance."<sup>9</sup> From this region of pure poetry and pure order Horace, backed by the authority of Augustus, descends to pronounce judgement on the false poets Demetrius and Crispinus. The *Poetaster* offers the most elaborate exposition of Jonson's vision of the ideal society—and yet, dramatically this vision is a failure. At the climax the adulation freezes the dramatic action.

What is interesting is the contrast to these stately order figures in the rebelliously individual urban wit Captain Tucca. Like Carlo Buffone he embodies an explosive anarchic energy that resists all impositions of morality and order—a wayward vitality that is typical of the city, and that we will later find in the sharpsters of *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. Tucca arouses as much sympathy as distaste, but we are finally asked to reject him as a disruptive element in society. From the excessive critical

heaviness with which Jonson tries to stun his life, it seems he is almost *afraid* of him for he fits into none of the ideas of order and excellence that he is developing here. The relation between Tucca and the order figures is deeply uneasy. The sharp contradiction between urban resilience and the forces of order gives the play its uneasiness of tone.

In this play we find Jonson desperately clinging to his vision of an ideal society which he is aware is threatened by new energies. It makes him regard the real world with an intense loathing for its failure to conform to his ethical standards. The ferocity of the imagery—of animals, of disease—betrays an animus that is not warranted by the events themselves. The figurative language threatens to burst apart, beyond dramatic control. Jonson is too insistent in stressing how distasteful his subject is. The climax of the play comes with emetic being poured down Crispinus' throat, so that he figuratively spits out his inkhorn terms. Afterwards he is recommended a diet of standard authors for his recuperation. This scene has been described as "Rabelaisian" but it is a far cry from the joyous carnality of *Bartholomew Fair*. The pseudodelicacy of the scene offends—with Horace virtuously justifying his conduct as the emissary of Augustus. And the assurance of the author's withdrawn attitude at the end does not win our sympathy. He will retire and watch the others

Like the barking students of Beares-Colledge,  
—Swallow up the garbadge of the time  
With greedy gullets, while my selfe sit by  
Pleas'd, and yet tortur'd with their beastly feeding.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, though artistically a failure, *The Poetaster* is a more interesting play than *Every Man In His Humour*. For though we noted the latent tensions in *Every Man* the basic frame of values was not seriously threatened. The misunderstandings were satisfactorily resolved in terms of approved social standards. The ethical norm was stable enough to make the aberrations of the wayward appear as irrational behaviour, ultimately capable of being rectified. But the equipoise is now breaking down. Jonson is losing his faith in the efficacy of the old positive standards and yet he is still unable to accept the new anarchic energies that are becoming prominent. The fears and falterings of his work must be seen in this context. It is the crisis of a whole culture—a transition from older patterns to a new concept of civilization. In his later comedies we will see him gradually finding a new orientation, coming to terms with the new age. Nevertheless, he never discards his faith in an ideal society. The conflict between order and authority on the one hand and an intelli-

gently aggressive insubordination on the other constitutes the basic dynamics of his comedies.

The immediate result of his loss of faith is a profound emotional disillusionment, which results in a jaundiced view of the world. The plays that follow—*Sejanus* and *Volpone*—seethe with a nervous energy—an indication of a profound anxiety being held in check. They reveal a passionate commitment to an ideal of perfection which is becoming increasingly incompatible with the mundane actuality, and this leads to a fear of what will happen when all its sanctions are removed. *Volpone* and *Sejanus* depict a cosmos where all norms have broken down, where even authority has become vitiated. In *Sejanus* Jonson gives a frightful picture of political power unchecked by any traditional sanctions. He is unable to present any positive forces to balance the total corruption of Sejanus and Tiberius. At the end there is no comfortable restoration of order—Sejanus' death leaves the still more unscrupulous Tiberius in complete sway with Macro as his new henchman. The senators and satellites are all servile and inconstant—the populace is frenzied, savagely tearing down the body of the fallen favourite. The few good characters are merely denunciatory and represent no positive virtues. Indeed, the action of the play only confirms Sejanus' unpleasant principles—"Twas only feare first in the world made gods" and "Ambition makes more trusty slaves, than need".<sup>11</sup>

*Volpone* too presents an unpalliated vision of men as bestially cruel and degraded. C. H. Herford finds it a play in which "the air is heavy and foetid with moral disease".<sup>12</sup> Harry Levin also regards the play as "Jonson's last experiment in poetic justice" belonging to the immature works in tone and ideological standpoint<sup>13</sup>. It is the stern moralist who wishes to hold up a terrible example of a world where conventional morality has become ineffectual. Mosca cynically remarks—

All the world is little else, in nature  
But Parasites, or sub-Parasites<sup>14</sup>.

In this ruthless, self-seeking, materialistic ethos all human relationships have been reduced to the level of those between host and parasite. Voltore, Corbaccio, Corvino, all prey on the (supposedly) dead Volpone. Volpone himself is a parasite, feeding on others in his turn, for he boasts that he does not work for his wealth. Jonson's moralising fervour has pushed his sympathies back to create a narrow stifling vision of humanity. After all, raven, crow and vulture represent a narrow class even among birds of prey. As C. H. Herford remarks, we cannot but contrast the

unrelieved monotone of their decadent and criminal corruption with the picturesque diversity of the victims of Face and Subtle.<sup>15</sup>

The play begins brilliantly, with Volpone invoking his gold in hyperbolic terms. The very extravagance of his figures condemns him while keeping us aware of the ethical norms that he is violating. His gold is his "shrine", "far transcending / All stile of joy, in children, parents, friends".<sup>16</sup> His covetousness has perverted his normal values. One finds the same control in the famous wooing scene with Celia. Volpone's values have become so perverted that he can only conceive of emotion in images of cloying sensuousness.

But this control is not sustained throughout the play. There seems to be altogether too much of extreme disgust and loathing. Throughout the play various forms of perversion are dwelt upon. Immediately after the magnificent opening scene, we are introduced to the grotesque creatures of Volpone's household—a dwarf, a eunuch and a hermaphrodite—the ultimate in abnormality. They are Volpone's "bastards"—"that he begot on beggars, Gipsies and black-moores"<sup>17</sup>. Volpone himself, purring on his bed as a lecherous though supposedly dying man, to whom Mosca brings the various clients, is a figure who often resembles a prostitute. One notes the teasing tactile sensations he desires to produce on his clients—

still bearing them in hand  
Letting the cherry knock against their lips  
And, draw it, by their mouths, and back againe.<sup>18</sup>

The physically unpleasant details of the characters are emphasised—Volpone's "filthy eyes" and "nose like a common sewre", or Corbaccio's "glazen-eyes".<sup>19</sup> There are also numerous references to violence and cruelty. Corbaccio threatens to cut open Celia's face "like a raw notchet", Volpone calls on Mosca to "play the artificer" and "torture 'em rarely". Later he describes the spectacle as a "feast".<sup>20</sup> We hear of Corvino being thrown into the street to have his "eies beat out with stinking fish".<sup>21</sup> All men seem equally savage and bestial.

Celia and Bonario are too inadequate to stand as the ethical centre of the play. The conventional morality they represent is portrayed as painfully ineffectual in such a vicious milieu. In the trial scene—which proves to be a mockery of a fair trial—they invoke their "conscience/And heaven that never fails the innocent", to which the Avocatori reply—"These are no testimonies".<sup>22</sup> And the representatives of authority, the Avocatori, are far from perfect—we see them anxious to placate Mosca as soon as

they learn of his new wealth. True, at the end justice prevails and all the wrongdoers are punished, but by that time our faith in the sanctity of all human institutions of order and authority has been eroded. We are inclined to echo Volpone's remark—"What face of truth, is here?"<sup>23</sup>

The bitterness of these plays of the middle period stems from the frustrated moralist's despair at the intractability of the physical world, its resistance to all censure and correction. Perhaps the experience of writing these plays forced Jonson to a realisation of

The conscious impotence of rage  
At human folly, and the laceration  
Of laughter, at what ceases to amuse.<sup>24</sup>

From now on we find him gradually overcoming this rancour, recognising the vitality of the physical world of noise, sense and vigour. In the great comedies—*The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman* and above all *Bartholomew Fair*, we find a buoyant zestful celebration of the disorderly, riotous, variegated, quotidian world. But Jonson never lapses into an easy, uncritical abandon. The early plays had accepted the conventional standards of morality and ended with all aberrants being brought back into social conformity. Jonson never abandons the ethical standards that he had put all his faith in, but he now recognises that there are wayward energies that cannot be forced into conformity. What is admirable is his ability to remain amused despite the lacerations that his ideals receive. The balance and poise of his mature comedies remain precarious, for the tensions are always there beneath the surface.

In the figure of Morose (in *The Silent Woman*), the misanthropist who shuts himself off from the noise of the outside world, we have a descendant of the lofty contemner of the world of the comical satires—Morose is in the line of Macilente and Crites. But the emphasis has now shifted. The satirist no longer has a world of transcendent virtue and timeless truth behind him—instead, his satiric rage is revealed as a form of egotism—

"All discourses but mine affect me".<sup>25</sup>

Significantly, his ideal is "the Turk in his divine discipline"<sup>26</sup>. He is a domestic tyrant. Note, too, Morose's fussy, affected diction, replete with redundancies and periphrases. As Jonson remarked in *The Discoveries*—

"language most shewes a man—it speaks out of the most retired and inmost parts of us"<sup>27</sup>.

In his wooing scene with Epicoene Morose speaks in an archaic language derived from courtly literature, but as soon as he is left alone the mask

slips—the old-fashioned courtliness gives way to a vindictive prophecy of all the misfortunes he will inflict on his nephew through his marriage. His self-absorption results in the sterility of his relationships with other people. His marriage is condemned to failure, for it involves his rejection of his natural ties of kinship with his nephew. By wishing to marry a silent woman—which in itself is an image of unnaturalness—Morose had really wanted “a statue or a motion only”, and he is aptly punished by his discovery that his wife is a “manifest woman” after all<sup>26</sup>. His marriage gives the outside world an excuse to break in upon his seclusion. Finally, he is driven to find a way out by a confession of impotence. His declaration “I am no man, ladies”<sup>29</sup> is an admission of his inadequacy.

At the opposite pole stands Truewit who performs the role of satiric expositor in the play. Instead of the severe moralist who belongs to a higher order of reality than the fools and mixes with them only to expose their folly, we have the gay young gallant who does not stand aloof in lofty disdain but belongs to a group of noisy urbanites representing all the values that Morose rejects. Nevertheless, Jonson still needs a satiric expositor to manipulate the fools into situations that will expose their folly and sentence them to derision. When we come to *Bartholomew Fair* we will find both expositor and justicer ridiculed in their turn and drawn into the circle of fools.

The contrast of the sterile self-absorption of Morose and the noisy gregariousness of the Truewit party becomes reflected in the central symbolic opposition of noise and silence. Note how so much of the noise is associated with the teeming city—in the very first scene we find a catalogue of the various sounds that make London so noisy.<sup>30</sup> The silent Morose mansion becomes opposed to the swirling city surrounding it. The invasion of Truewit and his friends into Morose's silent world signifies the intrusion of a world of noise, vigour and movement. The celebration of this riotous life is brought to a climax at the end of Act III. It begins with the sudden garrulity of Epicoene after the marriage, breaking the “coacted, unnaturall dumbnesse” of Morose's world.<sup>31</sup> Soon after Truewit comes in with the wedding guests, followed by La Foole with the wedding fare. The festivity is completed by Clerimont's music—and note that this music is made with “haire rosin and guts”<sup>32</sup> and belongs to the physical world—by Daw's epithalamion and finally by Otter's bull, dog and bear and promise of a “carouse”. Morose is incited to enjoy “Open pleasure and jollities of feast, of musique, of revells, of discourses”.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the joyous carnality of “spitting”, “coughing”, “laughter”, “farting”, “dauncing, noise

of the musique"<sup>34</sup> foreshadows the Saturnalian gaiety of *Bartholomew Fair*. Whereas in the two previous plays the imagery of animals suggested cruelty and cunning, here it is their procreative functions that are stressed. Truewit mockingly cautions Morose not to take his wife away and "mount the marriage-bed like a towne-bul, or a mountaine-goate".<sup>35</sup> Surrounded by the assorted noises of the physical world, Morose cries out in anguish—"O the sea breakes in upon me! Another floud! An inundation! I shall be o'erwhelmed with noise—I feele an earthequake in my selfe for't".<sup>36</sup> The imagery allies the energies represented by this group with the forces of nature,

One has to admire the uncompromising honesty which recognises the presence of discordant elements in the midst of this rowdy festivity. After all, the noise also includes the empty word-spinning of the two knights, and the vapid fashionable chatter of the Collegiate Ladies. Their whole way of life perverts all natural laws—with their names like "Centuare", their "masculine, or rather hermaphroditicall authoritie",<sup>37</sup> their reliance on "Art" to disguise nature, their use of contraceptive devices. Paradoxically, they associate birth with barrenness—

Many births of a woman make her old, as many crops make the earth barren.<sup>38</sup>

Admittedly Jonson's acceptance of the quotidian world, with all its life and motion, is ambivalent. Yet, placed beside the sterility of Morose's way of life, even such imperfect representatives of society seem preferable. The physical world is undoubtedly imperfect but one must still, like Truewit, immerse oneself in its realities, instead of cultivating a pose of disdainful aloofness. For, as Truewit realises, sermons "will not take"<sup>39</sup> in this world.

Perhaps Jonson's celebration of the powers of wordly energy is most unequivocal in *The Alchemist*. Throughout the play, our sympathies remain entirely with the trio of tricksters who embody the anarchic vitality of the urban underworld. Incorrigibly materialistic and and down-to-earth, they ridicule and exploit all self-deluding dreams, all attempts to escape from the mundane reality into a realm of absolute perfection. Jonson is not merely ridiculing gullibility or greed. Throughout the play alchemy stands as a symbol for various forms of exaltation. Just as the alchemist attempts to transmute base metal into gold, so also all the characters try to transform their very ordinary lives into something rich and rare. Their vain self-deluding dreams become perversions of

the desire for impossible perfection. From the opening exchange between Face and Subtle, where Subtle claims that he had—

Sublim'd thee, and exalted thee...

Wrought thee to spirit, to quintessence<sup>40</sup>

we find the use of alchemical terms as a metaphor for character transformation. Alchemy also becomes symbolical of the desire to outwit Nature—Mammon claims that Subtle can “firk nature up in her own center,

and teach dull nature

What her own forces are”.<sup>41</sup>

The tendency towards idealisation is further mocked through Kastriil's desire to learn the correct terminology of quarrel. It is, Alvin Kernan points out, a reflection of the characteristic Renaissance tendency to transmute the base realities of life into something rare and exotic. Through elaborate codes of conduct fighting is ritualised and made complex and elegant.

The love of idealisation is seen at its extreme in Sir Epicure Mammon, who soared far above the sordid world of actuality to wander among his self-deluding dreams<sup>42</sup>. His extravagant fantasies conjure up a world of softness and luminosity—ethereal and exotic rather than gross and fleshly. In his wooing of Doll he parodies the attitude of courtly love. He is quick to discern in her a “divinitie beyond/An earthly beautie!”<sup>43</sup> One who dreams of the luxuries of ancient Rome can only regard the life around him with disdain. Doll, too, must be elevated above the level of the everyday—this is “no climate

For her to live obscurely in, to learne

Physick and surgery, for the constable's wife

Of some odd hundred in Essen, but come forth

And tast the aire of palaces”.<sup>44</sup>

In these lines Jonson skilfully opposes the reality of life as it is actually lived by ordinary people to the incredible, unrealistic dreams of idealists striving for impossible perfection.

In contrast Face, Subtle and Dol are hard-headed realists, embodying the anarchic energies of the urban underworld. It is a world where older codes of morality and good behaviour are no longer applicable—where each man must fend for himself, relying on his own wits. It is the kind of world that is formulated in Machiavelli's *The Prince* or Hobbes' *Leviathan*. The older stable and morally coherent system is being disrupted by new forces of appetite and aggression. In “this war



of every man against every man—the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place—there can be no propriety, no dominion, no *mine* and *thine* distinct, but only that to be every man's, that he can get—"45. Like Allwit in Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* Face evades punishment because his wit is perfectly adapted to his environment—he wins what he can and keeps it.

These tricksters flourish by exploiting the idealists' capacity for wilful blindness and self-delusion, playing upon their fantasies and inviting them to even more extravagant flourishes. Their wonderful agility and versatility, their delight in role-playing, win our warm sympathy. They "cossen kindly, And heartily, and lovingly" and, in seeing "who shall sharke best"<sup>46</sup> engender a series of spectacular comic coups. One gets a sense of pleasure in the game for its own sake (like the professional pride of the cutpurse in *Bartholomew Fair*).

It is important to note the role of Surly. We might expect him to perform the function of the satiric expositor of the play, for, from the very beginning, he refuses to be duped by the rogues. But Surly's didactic role fails—he too is outwitted in his turn

"Must I need cheat my selfe,

With that same foolish vice of honestie"<sup>47</sup> he finally exclaims.

Moreover, we remember that Surly is far from perfect—there are indications that he too is a trickster and gambler :

Give me your honest trick yet, at primero,

Or gleek—<sup>48</sup>

He is not above trying to grab the best for himself, attempting to make a profitable marriage with Dame Pliant.

Any expectations that we might have of the restoration of stability and normality at the end are completely foiled. Lovewit does not arrive as the representative of outraged morality coming to pronounce judgment on the wrongdoers. His refusal to join in the general cursing of the house confirms our solidarity with all that the house stands for—a symbol of the gross and mundane in life, resisting all attempts at sublimation or refinement. Far from being an agent of justice, Lovewit embodies the mental agility and histrionic skill that we had seen so far in Face, Subtle and Dol. His marriage to the rich widow and his seizure of the loot confirm the final triumph of the wit and ingenuity without which one cannot survive in this world. In the end wit and mirth become allied

to nourishment. Lovewit is "indulgent to that servant's wit" for "I love a teeming wit as I love my nourishment"<sup>49</sup>. The play ends with festivity—with Face dedicating the play to the audience—

To feast you often, and invite new guests.<sup>50</sup>

The wayward anarchic forces of city life which had been embodied in the alchemists' house are seen at their fullest in the flux and motion of Bartholomew Fair. The scene has now widened to include an assortment of human types, cutting across the entire social hierarchy—from the two young gallants, down various strata of the citizenry—a proctor and his wife, a Puritan elder, a justice of the peace, till finally we come to the swarm of tricksters, sharpsters and swindlers who inhabit the Fair and prey on its visitors. The noise and bustle of the Fair provide the heightened conditions in which all pretensions fall off, till we finally come to recognise that men, for all their superficial differences, form part of the same community and are all involved inextricably with one another. Justicer, wit and gallant—all are scrutinised remorselessly and reduced to the basic humanity which they share with the fools and knaves they seek to chastise and reform.

Thus now we have no satiric expositor who can stand aside, controlling and commenting upon the action. At the beginning of *Bartholomew Fair* Winwife and Quarlous retain something of this role. Throughout the first act, they stand aside, keeping up a witty duologue about the various visitors to the Littlewit mansion. They go to the Fair to witness "excellent creeping sport", and think of the misadventures of Cokes as an enjoyable spectacle—

We had wonderful ill lucke, to miss this prologue o'the  
purse, but the best is, we shall have five Acts of him ere  
night : hee'le be spectacle enough :<sup>51</sup>.

Yet, once in the Fair, they find it difficult to preserve their detachment. They would like to remain aloof, yet we realise that they are more familiar with unsavoury characters like Whit and Knockhem than they would like to admit. Finally we see them duelling for the hand of Grace, enlisting the services of the cutpurse to further their projects—their role as detached bystanders completely discarded. The irony is turned against Quarlous himself when we find him still trying to maintain his superiority over Edgeworth's "companions in beastliness", trying to explain away his deal with the cutpurse—"it was for sport"<sup>52</sup>.

In this chaotic riotous world the traditional figures of law and authority can only appear comically incongruous. The three representa-

tives of moral authority—Waspe, Busy and Overdo—are all derided and held up to ridicule. Ironically, all three end up in the stocks, themselves accused of disrupting law and order. In the early plays those with a passion for setting things right had themselves been morally inviolable and had finally made their lofty standards prevail. Now the custodians of virtue are mocked in their turn. Busy who finds “abomination” in the carnal pleasures of the Fair, is a manifest hypocrite. Waspe, another enemy of licence, driven to fury by his pupil’s fondness for “vile tunes”<sup>53</sup> is ultimately chastised into a recognition of his own folly—“He that will correct another, must waunt faulte in himselfe”<sup>54</sup>. Overdo sees himself as the upholder of law and order in a corrupt society, the representative of “Justice” “the King” and “the Commonwealth”,<sup>55</sup>. To him the Fair stands as an “enormity” which it is his divine duty to reclaim. But this upholder of morality is himself vitiated by a love of gain—for he is forcing his ward to marry his brother-in-law for the sake of her fortune. And throughout the play, his missionary zeal is completely misguided. He sees the cutpurse as a poor innocent who must be rescued—ironically, his diatribe against tobacco provides Edgeworth with an ideal opportunity to steal Cokes’ purse. Overdo becomes a mock version of the traditional figure of the divine dispenser of justice who moves in disguise to discover enormities and finally reveals his true identity to restore the balance of law and order. Overdo’s disguise, “A certain middling thing between a fool and madman”<sup>56</sup>, reveals his true nature. He sees his moment of self-revelation as apocalyptic—when “cloud-like”, he would “break out in rain and hail, lightning and thunder, upon the head of enormity”<sup>57</sup>. But the moment of glory becomes a total catastrophe, as he discovers his own wife in the company of the Knaves he seeks to expose. Finally, Quarlous exhorts him to “Remember you are but Adam, flesh and blood”, to think of the Fair people as “good friends”, not “enormities”<sup>58</sup>.

Ironically, the only person in the play who respects Justice Overdo’s warrant is the madman Trouble-all. All through the play licences and warrants, symbols of legal sanction, are proved to be nothing better than dead letters of the law, capable of being perverted or misinterpreted. Trouble-all, who will not perform the slightest tasks without documentary sanction, can easily be deceived by Knockhem who forges a warrant. This madly conscientious law-abider finally becomes a hunted thief who steals Ursula’s pan to cover his nakedness. The play opens with a marriage licence drawn up by a ‘Littlewit’ for an improbable match

between Grace and a 'Cokes.' The emptiness of the licence is emphasised by Waspe refusing even to look at it and haggling instead over the price of the box that contains it. When Cokes wishes to see it, he is rebuffed—"there's nothing in't, but hard words."<sup>59</sup> Quarlous manages the largest theft by forging the licence. Inevitably, Overdo's carte-blanche of absolute authority falls into the wrong hands. For this is a disorderly anarchic world where law and order have become ineffectual. Even Grace, who stands for sobriety and good sense, has to decide her future through a lottery—with the madman Trouble-all becoming the arbiter of her fate. She recognises the absurdity of such a choice, yet this is the only way one can cope with an absurd world.

In this milieu the positive energies are located in the swarm of tricksters, sharpers and knaves who make up the Fair. Their world resists description in any but the grossest physical terms. At its centre looms the enormous figure of Ursula—"Punk, Pinnace and Bawd," presiding over the Fair as a life-force. She is "the fleshly woman," "having the marks upon her of the three enemies of Man"—"the World," "the Flesh," and "the Devill."<sup>60</sup> Hugely fat, and forever sweating, she is described in overwhelmingly physical terms. Her booth, with its perpetual eating, drinking, cheating, pimping and whoring epitomises the world of the Fair. The insistent physicality of this world is repeatedly stressed. There are constant references to the most basic physical urges—Mistress Overdo's need for a basin to spew in precipitates the denouement. It is, however, a world of joyous carnality—with no suggestion of prurience. One finds a similar vigorous obscenity in his poem on *The Famous Voyage*. It is a quality we naturally associate with Rabelais—an enthusiastic vulgarity which bespeaks an ease in the presence of life's grossness. To quote Jonas Barish, "The sense of organic process is everywhere"<sup>61</sup>. Mrs. Littlewit's pregnancy sets the plot in motion—and throughout the play Trouble-all's demented "Quit ye and multiply ye" runs like a refrain. We must also consider the numerous mentions of food and drink—the Puritan family's urge for roast pig, the gluttony of Busy, the gingerbread of Trash, the orgy of eating and drinking in Ursula's booth. Drinking and eating together are after all inalienably social acts, and one realises that these fair people, disorderly and quarrelsome though they may seem, all belong to one great community, bound together by ties of fellowship—witness, for example, their concern for Ursula when she is scalded by the pan.

But any discussion of the vigorous earthy physicality of the play tends to make it sound too much like a Saturnalian festive comedy. It

must be stressed that what we have here is no easy celebration of the grossness of life. The stern moralist of the comical satires, who judged actuality by a standard of ideal perfection, has not disappeared entirely. The satirical thrust may be more difficult to perceive, but it is still present. Jonson's attitude to the Fair, if not one of rejection, is certainly neither one of total indulgence. And indeed it is this complexity of tone that makes *Bartholomew Fair* the very great play that it is. Jonson's portrayal of the Fair is completely unsentimental. He evidently enjoys the vitality and daring of the sharpsters, but, with unflinching honesty, he also admits that they are totally unscrupulous and self-seeking. Their chief victim is Cokes, the innocent whose ardent enjoyment of the pleasures of the Fair endears him to us. Even he is dismayed at the "thieving and coz'ning in this whole Fair"—"I would not ha' used a dog o' the name so."<sup>62</sup>

The tension between disapproval and warm enjoyment is sustained till the very end. The shifts in tone keep the reader's attitude open—we are not allowed to settle into any fixed response to the Fair. Till the end, one is never quite sure that Jonson will not lapse into an acrimonious condemnation of the evils of the Fair. The puppet-play at the end offers an example of this ambivalence of attitude. In many ways the puppet-play is an image of the Fair—it mirrors the drinking, eating, whoring, pimping, and bickering that characterise the inhabitants of the Fair. Littlewit has made the classic stories of Hero and Leander and Damon and Pythias "a little easie, and moderne for the times."<sup>63</sup> It seems that the present age can only accommodate the lofty ideals of heroic love and friendship by debasing them to the level of an obscene tavern brawl. Human life has been scaled down to the limits of a trivial puppet play. It is a disturbing image of littleness and vulgarity. We must remember that puppet plays normally aroused Jonson's aversion—"A man cannot imagine that thing so foolish, or rude, but will find, and enjoy an Admirer; at least, a Reader or Spectator. The puppets are seen in despite of the Players."<sup>64</sup> Artistically, the puppet play is a nullity—it is a trenchant comment on popular taste.

This makes the final vindication of the puppet play all the more significant. It shows an admirable generosity that can enjoy with relish without glossing over any of the defects or shortcomings. The play ends in a spirit of festivity—with a feast and a continuation of the entertainment—and the gaiety is all the more moving because of our awareness of the tensions that Jonson masters in order to achieve this tone. \*

*Bartholomew Fair* represents the peak of Jonson's comic achievement. It shows the perfect balance between the opposing energies that one discerned all through his work—an appreciation of the vitality of an aggressive insubordination co-existing with a deeply felt longing for a society of perfect harmony and stability. But Jonson cannot sustain this balance for long. In the plays of his later period, the tensions that contributed to the complexity and energy of the great comedies have slackened, and the result is a loss of dramatic coherence. The conflicting interests, though still discernible, do not combine in any significant dramatic pattern. The lack of cohesion in *The Divell is An Asse*, for example, is also reflected in the uneasy shift in the structure. Jonson attempts to place his action within the framework of an older morality pattern, the role of satiric presenter being taken over by two devils who belong to an older stage tradition. But this framework remains extraneous to the main realistic action of the play. The major part of the play is taken up with a detailed and analytic observation of the contemporary urban scene. The focus is on topical themes like the working of industry, the Courtiers' monopoly distribution, legal corruption, and property swindles. Many of these themes will later provide the staple of Middletonian comedy—such as the cycle of rich tradesman cozening landed gentry, yet seeing his children grow up as gentry, and the young prodigals coming back to the city to be cozened in their turn by city sharks and coney-catchers. Much of the social criticism is severe, yet the ending is indulgent, with Fitz-dottrel voluntarily confessing his wrongdoings and being brought back into the fold. Yet the ending seems contrived—it seems an attempt to impose an optimism on a world seen sadly through cynical eyes. We detect a note of despair in his reliance on "The few that have the seeds of goodnesse left"<sup>45</sup>. He fails to give dramatic life to his ideal of perfection—Manly, Wittipol and Lady Fitz-dottrel fail to arouse the reader's interest.

To get a picture of the positive ideals that Jonson cherished throughout his career one must turn to his poetry. Both *To Penshurst* and *To Sir Robert Wroth* create an image of a society based on perfect order and harmony, gaining its vitality by the rejection of the pride and ambition that characterise the world outside. But Jonson never manages to incorporate this vision of communal harmony into his comedies. As we saw in *The Poetaster* any attempt to dramatise his positive ideals only freezes the dramatic action. For in the comedies Jonson is directly engaged with the contemporary urban scene, trying to come to terms with

its hectic, vaiegated life. London—the capital city and chief port, centre of expanding manufacturing industries, growing in importance as a centre of commerce—represents a new reality where older rules of morality no longer seem applicable. The essential dynamism of the comedies comes from this conflict of law and licence. We have here a classically educated, critical mind, committed to ideals of order and stability, who also takes a keen interest in the variety of city life—a life fraught with its own anarchic energies, resisting any impositions of law and order. Jonson admires the vitality of this world, and yet behind his celebration of its gaudy raucous energy, we discern the satirist's despair at the failure of real life to conform to his ideals of absolute perfection.

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  3. *Bartholomew Fair*—*H/S* Vol VI—Induction—Line 17.
  4. *Every Man Out of his Humour*—*H/S* Vol. III—Induction-1. 120-21.
  5. *Poetaster*—*H/S* Vol. IV—Prologue 1. 22-3.
  6. O.J. Campbell—*Comickall Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida*, San Marino. 1938, pg. 61.
  7. *Every Man Out of his Humour*—op. cit.—Act III, Sc. 4.1.28.
  8. *Poetaster*—op. cit.—Act V. 1.38-41.
  9. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 1. 1.52.53.
  10. *ibid.* Act V, "To the Reader"—1.45-48.
  11. *Sejanus*—*H/S* Vol IV—Act II, 1.162 ; Act I, 1.366.
  12. *H/S* Vol. II, pg. 55.
  13. "Jonson's Metempsychosis" in *Philological Quarterly*. xxii, 1943 pp. 237-8.
  14. *Volpone*—*H/S* Vol. V—Act III, Sc. 1, 1.12-13.
  15. *H/S* Vol. II—pg. 63.
  16. *Volpone*—op. cit.—Act I, Sc. 1, 1.12 ; 1.16-17.
  17. *ibid.* Act I Sc 5 1.43-45.
  18. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 1.88-90.
  19. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 5, 1.57.65, Act V, Sc. 3, 1. 25.
  20. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 7, 99 ; Act V, Sc. 2, 1.111 ; Act V, Sc. 3, 1.108.
  21. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 12, 1.140.

22. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 6, 1.16-18.
23. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 2, 1.35.
24. T.S. Eliot—*Four Quartets*.
25. *The Silent Woman*—H/S Vol. V—Act II, Sc. 1, 1.4
26. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 1, 1.29-30
27. Discoveries—H/S Vol. VIII-1.2031-2.
28. *Silent Woman*—op. cit.—Act III, Sc. 4, 1.38,42.
29. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 4, 1.44
30. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 150-180.
31. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 4, 1.54.
32. Act III Sc. 7 L6
33. *ibid.* Act III Sc. 5, 1.50.1.
34. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 1, 1.8.9.
35. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 5, 1.46-7.
36. *ibid.* Act III Sc. 6, 1.2-5.
37. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 1.80.
38. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 3, 1.60-J.
39. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 1.67.
30. *The Alchemist*—H/S Vol. V—Act, I, Sc. I, 1.68.70,
41. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 1, 1.28 ; Act IV, Sc. 1, 1.88.89. Note the sexual overtones in terms like "firk". Ironically, many of the alchemical terms also have sexual connotations. As in Act II, Sc. 3, 1.254-55 :

"She 'll mount you up like quick-silver  
 —and circulate, like oile"—  
 or later "I'll have gold before you  
 And less danger of the quicksilver  
 Of the hot sulphur—" Act II, Sc. 3, 1.286-8)

Alvin Kerman points out in the Yale edition of the play that quicksilver and hot sulphur, basic ingredients of alchemy, were also used to treat venereal disease.

42. One finds a useful gloss on the Mammon world in Bacon's conception of hope. In *De Augmentis* Bacon asserts that "they who are carried away by insane and uncontrollable passion after things which they only fancy they see through the the clouds and vapours of imagination shall in the place of works beget nothing else than empty *hopes* and hideous spectres." (Bacon—Works ed. Spedding, Ellis and Heath—London, 1857-74)—Vol. IV—p. 367.7. Bearing in mind Jonson's admiration for Bacon, we may consider Mammon as a Baconian hopeful.
43. *Alchemist*—op. cit.—Act IV. 1, 1.65-6.
44. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 1, 1.132-135.
45. Thomas Hobbes—*Leviathan*—ed. M. Oakeshott (Oxford 1946)—p. 83.
46. *The Alchemist*—Act I, 1.137-8, 1.160.
47. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 5, 1.83-4.
48. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 3, 1.284-5.
49. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 5, 1.150 ; Act V, Sc. 1, 1.16-
50. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 5, 1.165.
51. *Bartholomew Fair*—op. cit.—Ac III, Sc. 2, 1.1-3.



52. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 6, 1.21, 1.30.
53. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 4, 1.71.
54. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 4, 1.99-100
55. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 1, 1.1-2.
56. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 2, 1.144-5.
57. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 2, 1.4-6.
58. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 6, 1.96-7, 1.108-9.
59. *ibid.* Act I Sc. 5, 1.35-6.
60. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 6, 1.33-7.
61. J. A. Barish—*Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy*—Harvard University Press 1960—p. 226.
62. *Bartholomew Fair*—op. cit.—Act IV, Sc. 2, 1.70, 77-8.
63. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 3, 1.121.
64. *Discoveries*—op. cit.—1.608-611.
65. *The Divell is an Asse*—*H/S*—Vol. VI—Act V, Sc. 8, 1 172-3.

## ELIZABETHAN ACTORS AND ACTING

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SUSHIL MUKHERJEE

Speaking of Elizabethan actors, Stephen Gosson in *Plays Confuted In Five Actions* (1582) says that players were recruited from three sources. There were men who left their jobs to join a theatrical group. James Burbage, the founder of the first English playhouse, The Theatre, was a carpenter; Richard Tarlton, the famous comedian, swineherd; Robert Wilson a water-bearer; Heminges a grocer; Robert Armin a goldsmith's apprentice and so on. Other members of Shakespeare's company, Augustine Philips, Richard Cowley, William Sly, Henry Condell—all came from trades. The members of Bottom's company in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also came from various trades. Snug was a joiner, Snout a tinker; Bottom, a weaver; Quince, a carpenter. The second group came from the ranks of "common minstrels," and the third were "boys trained from childhood" who joined, to use Gosson's language, "the abominable company."

### *No Special Training :*

The actors of the early English theatre had to depend upon natural talent rather than any kind of systematic training for which there was no provision, except in the case of the 'boys.' In the Boys' schools acting was a part of education. The boys of St. Paul's School were trained to act in the Miracle plays and they had a tradition of two centuries behind them. The children of Chapel Royal were also similarly instructed. But few joined the professional groups before 1600.

### *Repertory System :*

The prevalence of the Repertory System also did not provide much time for systematic training for the early Elizabethan actors. The stage was supplied with a constant stream of plays, new and old, but all for a few days only. The average life of even a successful play was about 15 or 20 performances, not consecutive, but with other plays thrown in between. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Dr. Faustus* were two exceptions. They had a continuous long run. The Elizabethan actor had, therefore, to memorise

a lot. Edward Alleyn had to do 71 different plays, 52 new and 19 old, between June 5, 1594 and July 29, 1597.

#### *Commercial Theatre :*

The Elizabethan theatre was a commercial theatre above every thing else. Its main concern was success in terms of receipts at the box-office. Putting up new attractions was one of the means of this success. The writers of plays kept the stage fed with fresh plays. Plays were written in a hurry.

#### *The Rehearsal :*

The Rehearsal too was a hurried affair. Parts were distributed among the actors in separate strips of papers, with stage directions and brief 'cues,' for memorising. The Rehearsal Scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be referred to in this connection. Each player was concerned with his own part only, with no knowledge of the play as a whole. The complete play script was carefully guarded for fear of its being stolen by a rival company. The Producer, in the modern sense, was unknown. There would be a trainer for individual players. Shakespeare, it is said, was a good trainer, in fact, a better trainer than a player. Group-acting was not known. Individual brilliance rather than collective excellence was the aim. There was no long-range planning for the opening of a new play. There was brisk activity behind the scene and plays were brought on the stage with an astounding rapidity.

#### *The Star and the Comic Actors :*

Each Company had its 'star' actor. Edward Alleyn was the 'star' of Admiral's Men, Richard Burbage of Chamberlaine's Men and so on. But there was no scope for specialisation as the same actor was called upon to do roles of various types, and sometimes more than one role in the same play. This was called 'doubling.' For mob scenes there were 'hired men' and supernumeraries. Fat parts were reserved for the star actor and the writers had to take into account the demand of the star actor or his special capacity or preference. Edward Alleyn was the hero of all Marlowe's plays, while Richard Burbage was Shakespeare's tragic hero, from Richard III to Mark Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare kept Richard Burbage in view when writing his plays for the stage. Elizabethan dramatists had to shape, size and conceive characters keeping in view the players who would do them. For Will Kemp Shakespeare

wrote the role of Dogberry with broad humour which was Kemp's *forte*. When Robert Armin came for comic parts, Shakespeare created subtle humour for the artiste who was an expert—and we get Touchstone, Feste, and the Fool.

#### *Actor's Qualifications :*

Memory and versatility were demanded of all Elizabethan actors. Physical fitness and agility was a 'must' for him because, in the early stage acting was linked with dancing, vaulting, tumbling, fencing etc. Character-acting developed later. Until Marlowe characters did not 'develop' on the stage. Most of the characters were types, as in the Morality plays, and so the acting was more or less stereotyped. With more and more subtlety in characterization the art of acting developed.

The adults who joined the Acting companies, had, on the average, a grammar-school background and that was considered enough. Puttenham in his *Apology for Actors* speaks of "a good tongue" and a "good conceit" as necessary qualifications of an actor. "Any of these will do", says Puttenham, "but where both fail there can never be a good actor."

#### *Rhetorical Ability :*

Since Elizabethan drama depended a great deal upon words and verses, it was expected that the actors should have a good, powerful, and flexible voice with volume and intensity, right pronunciation, clear articulation, apt modulation, and also breath. Elizabethan acting was in a way allied to oratory, and teaching of rhetoric was part of grammar-school training. The external action of the orator and the actor had also a great deal of similarity. Granville Barker says : "Elizabethan drama was built upon vigour and beauty of speech and the Elizabethan actor had to make himself the appropriate medium to convey this vigour of action and beauty of speech to the audience."

#### *Boy Actors :*

The Elizabethan stage had no actress. Female roles were done by boys. "Squeaking Cleopatra" is too well-known an expression to be quoted today. No woman appeared on the English public stage till December 1660 when Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Rutler did the roles of Ophelia and Emilia in *Hamlet* and *Othello* respectively. The Boy Actors of the Elizabethan stage, after they were trained in the Tudor schools,

were recruited for the wandering companies, and later for the public theatre, and placed under some senior actors as apprentices.

It is unfortunate that of the boy actors only a few names are known, such as Solomon Pavy of Queen's Chapel, who died at 13 after only three brief years on the stage, and yet called "stage's jewel" by Ben Jonson; Abel Cooke, John Rich, Samuel Crosse, Robert Wilson, Samuel Gilburne, James Sands and a few others. But nothing is known about the roles they did. One thing however is clear. Shakespeare wrote women's roles keeping in view the artistes available, their talent and ability, their physical features and characteristics. In his essay on *Shakespeare's Actors*, G. B. Harrison has pointed out that when Shakespeare was writing romantic comedies he had in his company two boys with contrasting height and complexion, and so we have Rosalind, Beatrice, Viola who are tall and fair, while Celia, Hero and Maria were just opposite. Ivor Brown in his *Shakespeare* has drawn our attention to a very interesting thing. He says that towards the end of the 16th century, just before he started writing his major tragedies, Shakespeare in his romantic comedies created female characters the rendering of which needed special skill and talent on the part of the artistes concerned—and he had such artistes in his company. Brown, however, mentions no name. In the next phase, in his tragedies the heroines, Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia are not difficult roles from the acting point of view. They are sweet things who weep and make the audience weep. This is not so difficult a task as the rendering of the sprightly, lively, vivacious and brilliant roles of the heroines of his sunny comedies. This was because he had probably not the necessary talent in his possession at the time. As regards Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra, Ivor Brown says that it may be assumed that some boy actor had grown up sufficiently by this time to do these exacting roles. It may also be, Ivor Brown supposes, that *Antony and Cleopatra* did not become popular on the stage because of the failure of the boy actor in doing the very difficult role of the heroine with her "infinite variety." After Cleopatra, Shakespeare wrote only sweet roles of country-girls—Imogen, Marina, Perdita, Miranda—roles which could be easily tackled by boys.

#### *The Actors :*

The first to become famous as an actor was Edward Alleyn (1566-1626). Possessing an imposing figure and a powerful voice Alleyn exploited his natural gifts fully in the roles of Hieronymo (*The Spanish Tragedy*),

Barabas (*The Jew of Malta*), Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus. His style of acting was heavy and robustious. Marlowe wrote his "mighty lines" keeping Edward Alleyn's acting style in view. Alleyn was much admired till Richard Burbage introduced a new style. Alleyn's style was statuesque while Burbage had more movement and action.

Richard Burbage (1567-1619), son of James Burbage, the builder of the first theatre-building, The Theatre, was, by common consent, the greatest actor of the age. He was Shakespeare's 'hero,' as Alleyn was Marlowe's. Shakespeare wrote special parts for Burbage and Burbage too spent his entire acting-life in Shakespeare's company (Chamberlaine's Men and King's Men). Shakespeare was deeply attached to this actor-friend who successfully rendered roles of the heroes of his four great tragedies, as also those of Richard III (Burbage's fame as a tragic actor began here), Richard II, Henry V, Shylock, Brutus, Antony, Coriolanus, Romeo, Prince Hal, Pericles. He also played the roles of Hieronymo in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Shakespeare left him in his will a sum of 26 shillings and 8 pence to buy a memorial ring with.

Will Kemble ( d.1603 ) was the comedian of the company. By 1590 his reputation as a comedian in the style of Richard Tarlton, was established. In 1594 he joined Chamberlaine's Men and acted till 1599. Later he transferred his affection to Worcester's Men where he played in 1602-03, after which his name is not heard. Kemble's comic style included acrobatics and jigs. He could "bounce and jingle" on the stage. He was an expert in "low comedy" and Shakespeare's earlier clowns were made to suit his genius—Peter ( *Romeo & Juliet* ), Dogberry ( *Much Ado About Nothing* ). He had the habit of saying a few extempore lines. When Shakespeare makes disapproving remarks against this common vice of the clown through Hamlet's directions to the Players ( *Hamlet* Act 3 Sc 2 L.42-50 ), he had Will Kemble's habit in view.

Robert Armin ( 1568-1615 ) joined Shakespeare's company in 1600. Originally a goldsmith's apprentice, Armin began his acting career as a member of Lord Chandos' Men. He was a disciple of Richard Tarlton, but evolved his own style of comic acting which was more intelligent and refined. When he joined after Will Kemp, Shakespeare changed the character of the Clown and brought on the stage Feste ( *Twelfth Night* ), Touchstone ( *As You Like it* ), and above all, the Fool in *King Lear*. Armin also played the role of Dogberry done earlier by Kemp, but in a different style. His another important role was Polonius in *Hamlet*.

John Heminges ( d.1630 ), more well-known as co-editor of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays ( 1623 ), was not only an actor, but also business-manager of Shakespeare's company. Originally belonging to Lord Strange's Men, he joined Chamberlaine's Men in 1594. He acted in Ben Jonson's plays also—*Everyman in His Humour*, *Everyman Out of his Humour*, *Sejanus*, *Catiline*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*. According to Malone he did the role of Falstaff also. He left acting in 1611 and devoted himself entirely to the business side of the company.

Henry Condell ( d.1627 ) who was the co-editor, with Heminges, of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, also belonged to Shakespeare's company of players. He acted in Ben Jonson's dramas. He also played the role of Cardinal in *The Duchess of Malfi*. He gave up acting in 1623. He was the second recipient of 26 s. and 8 d. in Shakespeare's will for the purchase of a memorial ring.

Thoms Pope ( d.1604 ) was a member of Chamberlaine's Men since inception i.e.1594, and played high comedy roles, including that of Falstaff. He also played in Shakespeare's earlier comedies. A quick-witted jester and quibbler, he played in Ben Jonson's two Humour Plays. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* he did the role of Speed with Will Kemp as Launce. After Pope Falstaff was done by John Lowin.

Richard Cowley ( d.1619 ) was another comedian in Shakespeare's company whose physical frame and pale face suited the roles he played. He did Verges in *Much Ado* with Will Kemp as Dogberry. In *As You Like It* he was William, in *Twelfth Night* Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in *Henry IV Part II* Silence, in *Merry Wives* Slender etc.

William Sly ( d.1608 ) who acted in Strange's and Admiral's Men joined Shakespeare's company in 1594 and acted here till 1605. He was specially chosen for eloquent, romantic or soldierly parts—Lewis ( *King John* ), Dauphin ( *Henry V* ), Hotspur ( *Henry IV* ), Laertes ( *Hamlet* ), Claudio ( *Measure For Measure* ), Tybalt ( *Romeo & Juliet* ), Edmund ( *King Lear* ), Macduff ( *Macbeth* ) etc. He also acted in Jonson's *Everyman*, *Volpone* and *Sejanus*.

Augustine Philip's ( d.1605 ) name appears as "one of the principal actors" in the First Folio of Shakespeare's works ( 1623 ) but the roles done by him are not known.

#### *Elizabethan Acting :*

It is very difficult at this distance of time to say anything categorically about the style of Elizabethan acting. There is no physical evidence

available, either any record of voices to give us an idea of the manner of delivery of speeches or dialogues, or any action-picture of plays to tell us about the gestures, movements, expressions of the players. Tape-records, motion-pictures, television etc. will keep the actors of today alive for to-morrow, but the actors of yesterday are gone for ever. In the absence, therefore, of direct evidence we have to depend upon authorities who have tried to go into the matter on the basis of documents and materials available and have made their own conjectures. Their conclusions, however, are different.

*Formal or Natural ?*

There is strong difference of opinion whether Elizabethan acting was formal or natural. According to Prof. Alfred Harbage, Elizabethan acting was formal—i.e. it depended upon conventional gestures, patterned movements, accepted modes of delivery etc. leaving no liberty to the actor to strike his own path to convey a feeling or suggest a mood or portray a character, liberty which is so essential to 'natural' acting. The 'formal' actor recites as one reads a book, the 'natural' actor talks as one does in life. The supporters of the formal-acting-theory point out that in the Elizabethan period there were schools for oratory and "oratory and acting utilised similar techniques of voice and gesture". For different moods or feelings there were fixed and well-defined gestures and movements, expressions, both for speech-making as well as acting. Everything depended upon quick and correct delivery of words. There was no scope for innovation. The style was declamatory and the actor played to the audience around him and not to his fellow-actors on the stage.

On the other hand, B.L. Joseph, in his *Elizabethan Acting*, concludes that Elizabethan acting was not formal. While agreeing that the Elizabethan actor had "the delivery of an orator", B.L. Joseph adds that he had also "the ability to be the character." "The actor", says he, "was identified; he behaved as if he was the imaginary character come to life." "It was for this kind of acting", continues he, "that Burbage and Alleyn were praised." Joseph quotes Richard Flecknoe who described Burbage as a "delightful Proteus". Flecknoe speaks of Burbage as one whose acting involved what was done by contemporary orators—"animating words with speech, and speech with action." In external action too, i.e. "in the use of voice, countenance and gesture to communicate what had already been expressed in words by the author or was being expressed by the actor on the stage, the orator and the actor agreed." "Yet", says B.L. Joseph, "there was nothing stereotyped, stiff or formal about this external action." On the contrary, it was "lively, familiar and natural." In the



Grammar school—and almost all the Elizabethan actors had the grammar-school background—the boys were instructed to act lively and naturally. “For the orator as for the stage-actor the function of ‘external action’ was to express naturally and completely what was felt truthfully.” “The orator off the stage and the actor on it had to be able to express in action what was really felt.” This is anything but formal acting. It is the natural style of acting, though it must be admitted, not natural in the modern sense. “Hold the mirror up to nature”—this is the essence of natural acting.

Attempt has been made to hold the middle view by some scholars who are of the opinion that Elizabethan acting was formal when long speeches were delivered, and informal during brief dialogues. Others hold that it was a mixture all through, “the rigidity of formalism and the fluidity of naturalism judiciously blended.”

#### *Some Features of Elizabethan Acting :*

Though it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion as to whether Elizabethan acting was formal or natural, some guesses have been made from some undisputed facts. The facts are—

Firstly, though there were a number of entertaining elements in early Elizabethan drama like music, song, dance, clowning, fencing, etc. the chief pleasure was, according to Allardyce Nicoll, in the “harmony of words.” “Words were”, says Nicoll, “the true things of wonder and magic, and under the guidance of the book-holder or prompter, the performers spoke these words.” And, it may be pointed out that in the context of the Renaissance and the newly-awakened awareness of the possibility of the native tongue after a long period of domination by Latin and French, English words had assumed a force and an importance that they never had.

Secondly, Rhetoric was a popular subject of study and all young learners were taught the elements of oratory. Rhetorical delivery was a common enough feature, and the great tragic actors, consistently with public demand and preference, were naturally inclined to the manner of an orator on the stage. Taken to excess, this naturally appeared ridiculous, and hence Shakespeare’s warning, through Hamlet, to the wandering players, who often out-Heroded Herod ; to the robustious periwig-pated fellow who tore a passion to tatters, splitting the ears of the groundlings and so on.

Thirdly, the acting tradition of the inn-yard and open-space plays persisted at least for some time. And that acting, from the very circumstances of the case, had to be 'loud' or declamatory in nature so that words from the improvised platform might reach the big assembly that turned out 'to hear' plays.

Fourthly, consistently with the age, Elizabethan drama had a richness and vigour which often ran into extravagance, as Nicoll has rightly pointed out. Strong passion, powerful emotion, heroic energy rather than subtle psychology, refined sentiment or subdued feelings characterised Elizabethan drama. This afforded scope for declamatory acting. The Elizabethan plays aimed at acting or theatrical effects above everything else. The Elizabethan theatre was the actor's theatre. "At the heart of the dramatic presentation stood the actor", as G. Barker puts it, and the actor alone, unaided by scenery, light or sound-effects or other gimmicks with which we are familiar today and which have made the actor only a part of the whole, sometimes a very insignificant part. The Elizabethan actor was thoughtfully provided with words, "picturesque, sonorous and provocative words," in lieu of scenery, light and all that. On the effective delivery of words depended the success of the play and the fame of the player.

And finally, the design of the stage,—the platform stage with its three sections, the front, the inner and the upper stage, and the audience on three sides,—also determined the style of contemporary acting. The Elizabethan theatre was not the intimate theatre of today with limited number of numbered seats, polished, polite and peaceful patrons, and cleverly-manipulated audio-visual mechanisms. It was a theatre that conveyed more to the ear than to the eye. The Elizabethan actor's task was to reach the words to those who were on the three sides of the stage. His style of acting was conditioned by this factor.

#### *From Formal to Natural :*

All the above factors would lead to the conclusion that the style of acting had to be formal or oratorical, at least in the beginning. Gradually it changed. It is a fact that the style of acting depends on the available stuff to be acted. Bernard Beckermann in his *Shakespeare at the Globe* has referred to this transition in the style of Elizabethan acting. "In the plays of 1560's and 1570's", says Beckermann, "the verse was regular and conventional. The galloping fourteener left little opportunity for nuance. The actor who rendered such verse (as in *Cambises*) was encouraged in the conventional expression of emotion and reliance upon rhythmic sweep

for success." This argues for formal acting. The character of verse, he next points out, gradually changed with the entry of Marlowe and Shakespeare, and the acting-style too changed more and more to the natural. This will be evident from Shakespeare's directive, through Hamlet (Act 3 Sc2) to the players of his time, which may be summed up like this : "speak the speech trippingly on the tongue" avoiding the manner of "the town-crier" ; "do not saw the air too much with your hand, but use all gently" ; "in the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness" : "do not tear a passion to tatters to split the ears of the groundlings" : avoid "o'erdoing Tarmagent" or "out-Heroding Herod" etc. But there is also a warning against too tame a sort of acting. "Be not too tame neither." The important thing is discretion in acting—and this is a pointer to the natural style. As Shakespeare next puts it—"Suit the action to the word, the word to the action ; O'erstep not the modesty of nature." Then comes the most important pronouncement when it is said that "the purpose of playing is to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature." It is clear that Shakespeare was making out a case for the transformation of the acting style, from the formal to the natural.

#### *The Actor's Task :*

The Elizabethan theatre was, we have said, the Actor's Theatre. The audience-attention was on the central figure on the stage who dominated the stage. Others in the scene with him, unless it was a mob-scene, were only subsidiary. The chief business of the actor was to hold the attention of the audience by creating an illusion of reality. This illusion, he was taught from his grammar-school days, could be created only by *being* the character he was doing. He was taught that he could not rouse a particular emotion in his listeners unless he felt it himself. The actor, therefore, had to *identify* himself with his role.

In so far as the Elizabethan actor got no support from the stage which a modern actor does, his task was not easy. The actor's entrance and stepping forward had to be theatrical enough, and not mere walking. His voice was to reach an audience of average one thousand. Again, when the audience was almost all upon him, as it were, from three sides, how difficult it was to create in them an illusion that he is Macbeth or Lady Macbeth or any other dramatic character, particularly in the absence of necessary aids. While going to murder Duncan when Macbeth says : "Now o'er the one half-world/Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams

abuse/The curtain'd sleep" etc., there was the light of day all a round. The illusion of time or space had therefore to be created by the ability of the actor. He, however, got support from two sides. The playwright gave him appropriate words to create necessary effect by his skilful delivery of them. The audience too was prepared for a "willing suspension of disbelief," and imagine the "wooden O" as the "vast field of France" or look upon the mere shadows as substance. (Cf. Shakespeare's apology in *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for imperfections of the stage.) The comic actor, however, who had not many words to say, depended on a little bit of bodily action to create audience interest in the manner of a circus joker of today. Tarlton and Will Kemp did their clowning with a gusto. On a platform stage where subtleties of wit or sharpness of repartees were likely to be lost, some amount of horse-play did the trick. As theatre became more intimate the style changed.

An Elizabethan play was roughly a "two hours traffic." The acting, therefore, had to be quick. Even though no time was lost for change of scenery or for arrangements of properties or props on the stage, still the five-act plays needed swift delivery of words by the players. And it was the actor's task to convey to his audience, even by his swift delivery the meaning or the substance of the whole thing. We are to remember that the audience consisted of a majority that had only elementary education. Except in the cases of the chronicle plays where the story might have been familiar, the task of the actor was really difficult because he had to make known to his patrons what was unknown to them. There was no printed programme with an outline of the story as we have now. Leaving aside minute details the actor tried to convey the story above everything else. Until the emergence of Marlowe the greater emphasis in a play was on the story; and the actor brought it home to the audience by means of conventional gestures, movements, recitations which they could understand thanks to their play-going experience. "It seems to me," writes Joseph, "that the Elizabethan actors were able to perform more swiftly than modern actors and to communicate much more completely, not only because their audience was more accustomed to listening, but because of their own training and abilities as actors." The arrival of Shakespeare made the actor's task more difficult. "Shakespeare," says Beckermann, "gave his actors too rich a variety of emotions, of too fine a subtlety to permit them to rely upon stock rendition of outworn conventions." But Shakespeare had his Richard Burbage and Robert Armin.

The Elizabethan actor had also to handle a number of things skilfully on the stage, such as, soliloquies and asides, roles of ghosts and

supernatural beings, observation and disguise scenes, also battle-scenes and processions etc. These were very frequent in Elizabethan plays and needed proper rendering. The actors were not found wanting.

The Elizabethan Age was a romantic age and the stage was not outside the romantic influence. The style of acting, formal or natural, or a blending of both, was, in essence, romantic, with grace, beauty and colour. The theatre was a new experience. The actors had their admirers and the acting drew large crowds.

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# SHAKESPEARE AND THE EUPHUISTIC NOVELS

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## I

John Lyly's *Euphues* is a mirror of manners and a model of elegant speech, and in both respects it is an example of a new sophistication. The manners are derived from the courtly culture and, as to style, it is in some way, not yet exactly defined, associated with the Spanish style known as *Oratio aulica*. The attention to fineness and pomp of phrase is of course a general result of the revived study of the classics and the balanced oratorical prose of Cicero and Seneca. Euphuism represents the culminating point in the general tendency to write with charm and precision, with ornament and culture, at a time when Englishmen desired "to heare finer speach than the language would allow"<sup>1</sup>. Much of it is conscious artistry, the painful expression of a calculating scholar. For example, Lyly aimed at precision and emphasis, in the first place, by carefully balancing his words and phrases, by using rhetorical questions, by alliteration and further wordplay. For ornament, in the second place, he turned mainly to allusions and similes of various kinds drawn from Pliny and Plutarch. But his most daring ornamentation lies in the wholesale introduction of recondite knowledge, viz, from folklore, medicine, magic. And this mixture of quaint device and naive science resulted in a style which became fashionable in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

The chase for a particular source of Euphuism which continued almost unremittingly throughout the second half of the nineteenth century has now been given up. Ever since the publication of Professor Morley's article in *Quarterly Review*, April, 1861 and more particularly, Dr Landmann's book *Euphuismus* in 1881, attempts have been made to hunt it down to one source or other. For example, Dr Landmann maintains that Lyly's Euphuism is an adaptation from the Spanish writer Antonio de Guevara<sup>2</sup>, whose *alto estilo* exhibited many of Lyly's special marks, such as parallelism of sentences, the marking of corresponding words by consonance and rhyme, antithesis, and rows of similes

taken from nature rather than Pliny. Dr Landmann, however, acknowledges the intervention of Sir Thomas North, whose *Dial of Princes* is a translation of Guevara's *Libro Aureo* from an intermediate French version, and also of George Pettie (*Palace of Pleasure*, 1576), for the addition of alliteration which is not to be found in the Spanish writer. T. W. Bond<sup>3</sup> on the other hand, thinks that "whatever Guevara's share in inducing in England a style, the like of which appeared in several countries about the same time, it is essential to emphasize the far closer resemblance to Euphuism in the case of North and Pettie". And of the two, it is North "who must be regarded as the real founder of our Euphuistic literary fashion". But "whatever Lyly's debt to North in point of subject-matter", Bond adds, he owes little to him "in point of style" and Pettie is "an exact model of the style of *Euphues*". While recognizing Pettie's rhetoric as an example of the fully developed Euphuism, C. S. Lewis<sup>4</sup> is of opinion that Euphuism as a structural decoration alternative to inkhorn decoration of vocabulary is the result of gradual emergence. And "what constitutes euphuism", C. S. Lewis adds, "is neither the structural devices, nor the 'unnatural history' but the unremitting use of both. The excess is the novelty ; the euphuism of any composition is a matter of degree."

Without going into the details of Lyly's structural devices, which T. W. Bond, and M. W. Croll & Harry Clemons have done in their editions of Lyly's works, it may be useful to turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary* for a working definition of Euphuism.

### *Euphuism*

1. Properly, the name of a certain type of diction and style which originated in the imitation of Lyly's *Euphues*, and which was fashionable in literature and in the conversation of cultivated society at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century. Hence applied to any similar kind of affectation in writing or speech, and (loosely) to affectedly periphrastic or 'high flown' language in general.

The chief features of 'euphuism' in the proper sense are : the continual recurrence of antithetic clauses in which the antithesis is emphasized by alliteration ; the frequent introduction of a long string of similes all relating to the same subject, often drawn from the fabulous ascribed to plants, minerals, and animals ; and the constant endeavour after subtle refine-

ment of expression. The sense in which (exc. in books on literary history) the word is now commonly used, is chiefly suggested by the absurd bombast which Scott puts into the mouth of Sir Piercie Shafton (who is described as a 'Euphuist') in *The Monastery*: this caricature, however, bears very little resemblance to the genuine 'euphuism'. Some loose uses of the word can hardly be accounted for exc. by supposing that the writers (recognizing the familiar prefix eu-) had the notion that its etymological sense was 'fine talking' or something equivalent.

So, 'Euphuism', in its wider sense, stands for any linguistic affectation, the artificial or the studied display of the fineness of language. Be it a 'vocal ornament'<sup>6</sup> or 'inkhorn decoration', Euphuism involves ornamentation, the surplusage or the non-essential. In other words, it is a style in which the form exceeds the matter. Speaking of literary style Pater<sup>6</sup> comments that it should be independent of all removable decoration; actually "it is impossible to detach the form from the idea, for the idea only exists by virtue of the form" (Flaubert as quoted by Pater). This inseparable connection between the form and the idea or the words and their meaning has also been emphasized by the great Indian poet Kalidasa in the opening verse of his *Raghuvansham*:

Vāgarthābība Sampr̥ktau Vagartha Pratipattayā  
Jagataḥ pītarau bandē Pārvatī Paramēṣvarau

For the acquisition of words and their meanings I bow down to Parvati and Parameswara—the parents of the Universe—who are inseparably connected with each other like a word and its meaning. So, the effort after elaboration, or the use of words in excess of the meaning, the form exceeding the matter, may, generally speaking, be termed as a tendency to Euphuism. It is the element of exaggeration in Lyly that attracted notice. He harped on the string perpetually to weariness, and in his devotion to form he forgot its large dependence on matter.

There are so many characteristics of Lylyan Euphuism enumerated by T. W. Bond and others. But the most dominant trait noticed alike in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and by all other writers is "the continual recurrence of antithetic clauses", which renders an architectural design to Lyly's prose. For example, we may quote one of the innumerable passages in Lyly:

Alas, Euphues, by how much the more I love the high climbing  
of thy capacitie, by so much the more I feare thy fall. The



fine christall is sooner crazed than the harde marble, the greenest Beeche burneth faster than the Dryest Oke, the fairest silke is soonest soyled, and the sweetest wine tourneth to the sharpest vinegar...

In the structure of his sentences Lyly seeks emphasis by antithesis, which, as regards form, might usually be called parallelism. "The method of ornament and illustration which, though properly considered as part of style, are yet more akin to the material than to the architecture of thought"<sup>7</sup>.

It will now be our endeavour to show that in Euphuistic novels generally and in Lyly in particular the stylistic devices viz, antithesis and parallelism, are not confined to the structure of the sentences alone, but are a part of the larger architectural design on which the novels have been built. To be more precise, the content is largely determined by the form, which however becomes more complex with Greene and Lodge than with Lyly because of the simultaneous influence of Sidney's *Arcadia*. Lodge's *Rosalynde : Euphues Golden Legacie* is set in *Arcadia* and in *Menaphon* Greene acknowledges his double debt to Lyly and Sidney, presenting his story to "Euphues in his cell at Silexandra" and by placing his scene in *Arcadia*.

Apart from the stylistic devices the euphuistic novels have some common qualities : the story, usually thin, is spun out by interminable repetitions in parallel situations which emphasize the didactic element. For example, Lyly's *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit* (1578) has a flimsy story which is but a trellis to support endless didacticism. The scenes, eleven in number, are laid in drawing rooms, and there is little action : the conflict is mainly mental and verbal rather than external. In a preliminary scene Euphues is rebuked by an old man for his frivolity ; but like all young heroes in the euphuistic novels—viz, Philautus in *Euphues and His England* (1580), who pays no heed to old Fidus' warning against love ; or Saladyne in Lodge's novel defying his dead father's instructions : or Greene's hero *Menaphon* acting against the voice of his conscience—Euphues acts contrarily : falls in love with an Italian lady by betraying his friend. He is, in turn, betrayed by the lady who shifts her affection to a third man much inferior in birth. The two friends are now reconciled and Euphues in remorse writes a 'Cooling Card for lovers' which is intended as a warning to his friend. The antithetical pattern is largely supported by parallelism of the two parts of *Euphues*. The theme of reckless youth warned by old age represented by Euphues and Eubulus in

Part I is repeated in *Cassander and Callemachus* and in *Fidus and Philautus* in part II. Similarly, Euphues' disappointment in love is repeated in those of *Fidus and Philautus* in part II. In each part there is a rift in friendship followed by reconciliation.

Part II however marks a distinct advance in art because more space is given in it for action: voyages and journeys are described; the manners, customs and government in England are discussed; but the situations in general are repetitious. The inset story of *Cassander and Callemachus*, the rich old man and his only son, is paralleled by the first generation story of the old dying father and his two sons, *Cassander* and his younger brother, the hermit. *Callemachus*, like his uncle, the hermit, returns from his travel with bitter experience—"his mind infected with his body, his time consumed with his treasure, nothing won but what he cannot lose though he would—misery". So not only are the evils of foreign travel emphasized by parallel incidents of two generations, but the need of experience and foresight in controlling the rashness of youth is simultaneously recognized.

Coming now to the theme of disappointment in love Lyly adopts the same device in the second part of his novel as he has done in the first. Finding *Philautus* oppressed with melancholy *Fidus* recalls his own bitter experience in love: how ineffective had been his wooing of *Iffida* who proved much too clever for him. Asked by the lady in sport as to whom he would choose as his bride—a very fair but foolish girl, or a marvellously witty but yet marvellously wanton, or a virtuous but deformed girl, *Fidus* showed his preference for the witty wanton. But this joke meant to amuse the lady had the only effect of giving her a handle against her lover. And when *Fidus* played the same trick on her enquiring of her preference for one of the three suitors—the first handsome, the second witty and the third enormously rich, the lady sportively wriggled out of the difficulty by preferring the suitor who would be a combination of all three: beauty to please the eye, wit to please the ear, and wealth to comfort the heart. Being pressed to choose but one of the three given alternatives, she gave her verdict in favour of the third—the man with enormous wealth, which she knew *Fidus* had not. So the sophisticated love game ended in frustration which brought *Fidus* near death. Recollecting his own pangs of love which drove him to lifelong solitude he warned *Philautus* against love's deceptive snares:

You see what Love is—begun with grief, continued with sorrow, ended with death; a pain full of pleasure, a joy

replenished with misery, a Heaven, a Hell, a God or Devil, and what not ...

But neither the old man's warning nor his friend's 'Cooling card' had any effect on Philautus who fell straightway in love with the English girl Camilla. And when nothing availed—neither wooing in masque nor through letters, Philautus in remorse turned to his friend Euphues with whom he was reconciled once again.

It may be pertinent here to state that the heroes and heroines of Lyly's novel belong to high society with its set pattern of sophisticated behaviour and language, just as pastoral lovers have their own code of conduct approved by the literary convention of which Sidney's *Arcadia* is an exponent. But "in spite of its title and its reputation the elements of Romance and Pastoral in the *Arcadia* are not of primary importance. The pastoral setting is merely decorative"<sup>8</sup>. It serves as a poetical interlude to the multifarious incidents, inset stories, moral disquisitions with which the plot is filled to overflowing. There is nonetheless a repetitive pattern which is particularly noticeable in the musical inter-chapters, which with their innumerable songs, madrigals, with the shepherd boy piping "as though he would never be old" have such a stylized quality as to mark them off from the main narrative with which they are imperfectly blended.

In an illuminating book recently published, Northrop Frye writes of the conventions of prose-romance, which show little change throughout the centuries. He has noticed some of the characteristic elements of the Greek romances repeated fifteen centuries after in *Guy Mannering* :

In the Greek romances we find stories of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies about the future contortions of the plot, foster parents, adventures which involve capture by pirates, narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine<sup>9</sup>.

With the composition of Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580) the "oracle" entered into English literature and Greene used it in two of his romances : *Pandosto* (1588) and *Menaphon* (1589). Apart from the oracular motif, there are many ingredients of the Greek romance, viz adventures, narrow escapes from death, revelation of the identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine, to be found in both Sidney and Greene. Greene's romances in particular reveal more fully all the characteristic qualities of the Greek romance. This, in fact, is a further confirmation of the repetitive pattern that I have traced in the euphuistic novels in general.

The style of *Arcadia*<sup>10</sup> is also antithetical, alliterative and balanced although Sidney had no patience for Lyly's "similiter cadences" by which he apparently meant the word-schemes and far-fetched metaphors. (Compare Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*—later sections where he writes on the artificial nature of the contemporary verse and prose.) Nevertheless the Arcadian style is stilted, somewhat affected. There is, for example, the use of fine words to lend a false dignity to simple action. Compare the passage describing the death of Parthenia, who disguised as the Knight of the Tomb had been mortally wounded by Amphialus :

But the headpiece was no sooner off, but that there fell about the shoulders of the overcome knight the treasure of fair golden hair, which with the face, soon known by the badge of excellency, witnessed that it was Parthenia, the unfortunately virtuous wife of Argalus ; her beauty then, even in despite of the passed sorrow or coming death, assuring all beholders that it was nothing short of perfection.

Although the opening lines extol the attractions of Arcadia for "the moderate and well tempered myndes of the people" who follow "the course of nature," what actually induced Basilus to renounce the court was not the superior charm of country life but his dread of losing the crown to a foreign power, his elder daughter being stolen and the younger "embracing an uncouth love", all of which the Delphic oracle had predicted. His dialogue with his wise counsellor Philanax shows that his consulting the oracle has been indiscreet and his shirking of administrative responsibility a cowardly action :

I would then have saide unto you that wisdome and vertue  
bec the onely destinyees appointed to man to follow, wherein  
one oughte to place all his knowledge.

\* \* \*

Why shoulde you deprive youre self of governing your  
Dukedome for fear of losing youre Dukedome, like one that  
should kill himself for fear of deathe ?

And it is to prevent Basilus from "his burying himself alyve" and to persuade him to return "to employ his oulde yeares in doing good" that brought his friend Evarchus to Arcadia (Book V).

So, the ideal of life which *Arcadia* seems to uphold is the Renaissance ideal of action, and not the Arcadian ideal of retirement. In fact, Basilus' indulgence in Arcadian bliss when the country needed his participation

in state-affairs is but an aberration, which shows the imbecility of his mind. This is further confirmed by his foolish dependence on the idiotic rustic Dametas for the protection of his daughter Pamela, whose abduction had been predicted by the Oracle, and his own inability to see through Pyrocles' disguise. Indeed so great is his infatuation for the disguised prince that he becomes a laughable victim of his clever ruse : he solicits the aid of his daughter to press his love-suit to her lover, and finally finds himself in the farcical situation of mistaking his wife for the supposed mistress.

No less crude is the metamorphosis of the two young princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, who after having performed the wonderful feats of killing a dragon and bringing succour to distressed ladies are no sooner come to Arcadia than they are transformed to sighing lovers, one assuming the disguise of an amazon woman, another attending the ridiculous rustic as his servant in the guise of a swain. But what actually brings them to the notice of the princesses is their heroic feat in killing a lion and quelling a riotous mob by skill in arms and oratory : the typical accomplishments of the Renaissance hero. Even then the young lovers had no smooth course. Musidorus had to prove his refinement to the princess Pamela by means of a clever subterfuge : on the pretext of proposing love to the silly Mopsa he spoke in a polished and exalted manner, and made a present of a golden altar dedicated to Pollux with the Latin inscription—*Sic vos non vobis*. Still, nothing would convince the sophisticated lady about the nobility of his birth till he had revealed his identity as a prince with the credentials of letters received from his homestate. The younger princess Philoclea, more simple being less experienced in life, felt an instinctive attraction for the disguised prince Pyrocles, who, however, had little access to her being the object of simultaneous infatuation of Basilus and his queen. When at last by means of a clever trick he had the princess alone by him as the supposed emissary of her father's love, he did not miss the opportunity of revealing his noble ancestry :

I say, I say, O onely Princes attend here a myserble mirackle  
of affection, behold here before youre eyes Pyrocles, Prince  
of Macedon, whome onely yow have broughte to this falle of  
fortune and unused Metamorphose whome you onely have  
made neglect his country, forgett his father and lastly forsake  
hym self.

Thus the princes and princesses carry their sophistication to the Arcadian haunts, where the real inhabitants who come to life are the

ridiculous, one-eyed, hunch-backed buffoon Dametas, his shrewish wife and the silly daughter. They alone have been knitted into the fabric of the main story, serving as broadly farcical parallels to the main characters. Like Pyrocles playing on the absurd infatuation of Basilus and the queen, Musidorus too played on the greed of the rustic, the jealousy of his wife and the foolish matrimonial phobia of the daughter till Dametas was found vainly digging at the root of a tree in search of hidden treasure, his wife kicking up a row at the nearby town in jealous rage and the silly daughter at the top of a tree, her eyes bandaged, expecting Apollo to speak to her. The other rustics who figure in the story are the revellers at night who fled like frightened beasts at the approach of the lion, or the drunken rout who while observing the Duke's birthday suddenly turned in fury to kill him or burn him alive. Even the pastoral entertainment with its community songs and dances borders on the farcical with the buffoon acting as its director :

And him self stood like a Director over them, with nodding,  
gaping, wincking or shewing how he did like or myslike those  
things hee did not understand.

The best specimen of the rustic entertainer, Lalus compares unfavourably with Dorus (Musidorus) when they come to describing their respective mistress in pleasant conceits. Lalus compares his ladylove, Kala, with a lamb, a cony etc.

Mylde as a lambe, more deynty than a cony ys,  
Her eyes my eye sighte ys, her conversacyon,  
More glad to mee, then to Myser money ys.

Dorus' description has on the whole an ethereal quality about it and is more sophisticated. He says he cannot describe her being herself the collection of best things : "She ys herself of best things the collection." This is followed by a grotesque representation of Cupid by the shepherd Dicus—Cupid wearing tattered rags through which one might see his body being full of eyes, his head horned and having long ears, his feet cloven and out of his mouth hangs a lace which holds the picture of a handsome man and a fair woman. Although this provoked mirth in the king and his companions, the superstitious rustics disliked the blasphemy ; and one among them narrated Cupid's vindictive rage in course of which the two princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, are brought into the picture as deliverers of the victims of the angry god. So, the past exploits come to be thinly linked with the present, the central characters being the

same. But the effect of such inset stories is to establish the main story as one of a category, giving it a broad significance. The parallelism seems to emphasize the heroic theme of the novel which has Arcadian setting as merely an embroidery.

In fact the heart of *Arcadia*, as C.S. Lewis has noted, is the nobility of its sentiments. The two young heroes are magnanimous friends and noble lovers who have an exalted notion of virtue from which they do not swerve even at the successive assaults of feminine allurements. When at long last they succumb to a momentary impulse, it is to a lady to whom each has been united in affection. But this single lapse (mentioned in *Old Arcadia* and omitted in the Folio edition—1593) comes in for severe condemnation according to the strict laws of Arcadia as administered by the uncompromising moralist Evarchus who has no hesitation in sentencing his only son to death. Even Gynecia, the queen, who represents the spectacle of a woman helplessly wriggling like a fish hooked in the ardour of her passion, is not without a painful awareness of the atrociousness of her action. And the moment she realizes that she has unwittingly administered poison to her husband she is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. Basilus recovering from his stupor gives a happy turn to the story which ends with general reunion and reconciliation in the manner of the pastoral. One wonders if the conventional pastoral romance has such an exalted code of morality !

The remarkable thing is that the nobility of behaviour and sentiments is represented by the intruders to Arcadia and not by its actual inhabitants, the two groups, between whom there is almost an unbridgeable gulf. The intriguing courtiers are yet capable of nobility ; if the simple rustics are free from intrigues they are also incapable of the nobility of their betters. The Arcadians have their simple joys and a simplicity of outlook, which sometimes borders on idiocy. Sidney's preference is unmistakable. He has set a standard of manners which is as much sophisticated as it is exalted.

As we turn from Lyly and Sidney to Lodge we notice the double influence of his predecessors. In *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie*<sup>11</sup> (1590) Lodge repeats the Lylyan antithesis, zoological similes and parallel cadences, but the story is pastoral. There is a change in love's sequel from frustration to fulfilment in conformity with the pastoral convention. Although there is a good deal of euphuistic devices both in the language and the form of the novel and no lack of didacticism, the latter loses its point in being but an overcautious warning against the dangers of love,

which the lovers have done well to have left unheeded. For example, there are warnings against the snares of love voiced almost in identical terms by persons who are as much different in age and status as the old knight Sir John of Bordeaux, the princess Rosalynd and the Virgilian shepherd Coridon.

Sir John of Bordeaux :

.....beware of Love, fore, it is farer more perilious than pleasant, and yet I tell you fancie is a fickle thing, and beauteous paintings are trickt up with times colours, which being set to drie in the Sunne, perish with the same.

Coridon : Ah Lorrel lad, what makes thee harry love ?

A sug'red harm, a poyson full of pleasure,  
A painted shrine ful-fild with rotten treasure,  
A heaven in shew, a hell to them that prove.

Rosalynd : Beware fonde girle Seest thou not how Venus seeks to wrap thee in her laborynth, wherein is pleasure at the entrance, but within, sorrowes, cares and discontent ; She is a Syren, stop thine eares...at her melodie, and a Basiliske, shut thine eyes...

In repeating the warning against love which serves no purpose Lodge has been merely following a convention. So do the three love-episodes all conform to a popular pattern in the Renaissance literature, and basically they are all alike. For example, there is little to choose between the Rosalynd-Rosader and the Alinda-Saladyne episodes, for each of the lovers is an adventurer who does impossible feats, and being smitten by love is suddenly exalted to poetic mood. But the Rosalynd-Rosader episode being longer gives a fuller picture of the romantic-pastoral convention. So long as Rosader is at the court, he is engaged in a series of adventures, feels the 'sacred flame of love' at the first exchange of glances with Rosalynd, and like a medieval knight derives encouragement from the lady's eyes as he wrestles with the king's wrestler. But as he enters Arden, he falls in line with the pastoral convention and his behaviour and even his language are not very different from those of the shepherd Montanus. Both Rosader and the shepherd express the pangs of heart in eclogues, one to his mistress and the other to the Virgilian shepherd Coridon. Like Phoebe, Rosalynd also assumes the attitude of a disdainful mistress even though she has been deeply in love, and describes the object of Rosader's love as a scornful maiden who will never condescend to love him and proposes that he should rather seek the hand of Alinda. She assumes romantic



postures, refining on the philosophy of love and also repeating some of the phrases with which the shepherd Coridon has cautioned Montanus against the snares of love.

So, it is the conventional pastoral love-making that is repeated in all the three love stories. Not only do the intruders feel the superior charm of the sylvan retreat, they also embrace the way of life, repeat the words and even the behaviour-pattern of the children of the soil, which have been approved by Theocritus and Virgil.

Greene's *Menaphon*<sup>12</sup> is a Euphuistic novel which exhibits the Lylyan love for parallel, antithetical sentences and fine phrases ; it is also a pastoral romance set in the promontory of Arcady where shepherds and shepherdesses make their love in eclogues, and a mysterious prophetess appearing at the end brings about the fulfilment of the oracular pronouncement with which the novel started.

The repetitive pattern that we noticed in Lyly and Lodge acquires a new dimension because of the element of rivalry in love, which simultaneously brings into focus the contrast between the court and the country. The central story of the ship-wrecked princess Saphestia wooed alike by the shepherd Menaphon and her own unrecognized husband Melicertus is further complicated by the incestuous passion of the heroine's father and son who are enamoured of her beauty. There is also the subsidiary episode of Doron and Carmela, two simple rustics, whose love-affair sets off the main story by contrast. Running parallel to the central story are the episodes of the Thessalian princess Olympia and the shepherdess Pasena, the two stand-by girls, who serve the purpose of bringing about a happy conclusion by the general pairing off of the lovers—"lest there should be left anything unperfect in this pastorall accident".

Thus the theme of frustrated love implicit in amorous rivalry is given a new turn by Greene. But this would not have been possible without the introduction of the supernatural, which Greene might have borrowed from Sidney. Greene was however no mere imitator : he surpassed both his models, Lyly and Sidney. Though he shared Lyly's love for balanced sentences, alliteration etc. he does not spoil his work by excessive use of them, nor does he sacrifice the story to mere decoration or to a moral lesson. Such a complicated plot with its whirling movement leaves little room for verbal jugglery and moral disquisitions. Even so, there are echoes of Lyly in the early part of the story, but these become comparatively scarce as the story advances.

Menaphon thy minds favours are greater than thy wealth's fortunes, thy thoughts higher than thy birth, and thy private conceipt better than thy publique esteem.

Love Menaphon, why of all follies that ever poets fained, or even men faulted with, this foolish imagination of love is the greatest.

One cannot miss the antithetical balance, the alliterative jingle of the euphuistic style, of which the succeeding passage affords better illustration in curious parallels :

Saphestia : Sweet Lamedon, once partner of my royalties, now partaker of my wants, as constant in extreme distresse, as faithful in higher fortunes : the Turtle pearketh not on barren trees, doves delight not in foule cottages, the Lyon frequents no putrified haunts, friends followe not after pouvertie, nor hath sinister chance anie drugges from the phisitians.

Menaphon attracted by the exquisite beauty of Saphestia takes her to his protection and there is a free movement in the language which becomes more or less free from decoration till they develop a mutual attraction for each other. Menaphon's avowal of love brings forth Saphestia's reply in the typical euphuistic parallels :

...I see by prooffe there is no adamant so harde, but the blood of a Goate will make soft ; no forte so wel defenced, but the strong batterie will enter ; nor any heart so pliant to restless labours, but enchantment of love will overcome.

Significant in this connection is the fact that there are fewer euphuistic parallels put into the mouth of the shepherd Menaphon than in the mouth of the shipwrecked princess whose refinement of mind is tested by Melicertus, another intruder to Arcadia, in terms of verbal ornamentation. At the shepherds' feast in which Saphestia is elected 'Mistress of the Feast' because of her unparalleled beauty, she was asked what shape, if metamorphosed, she would assume. Her preference for the sheep is symbolic of her assumed role.

Daphne I remember was turned to a bay tree, Niobe to a flint, Lampetia and her sisters to flowers and sundri virgins to sundri shapes according to their merites but if my wish might serve for a Metamorphosis, I would be turned to a

sheepe . my supposition should be simple, my life quiet, my food the pleasant plaines of Arcadie and wealthie riches of Flora, my drinke the Coole streames that flow from the concave promontorie of the continent, my aire should bee cleare, my walkes spacious.

Then follows a pretty wit-combat between Saphestia and Melicertus, which is set off by the broad jest between Menaphon and the shepherdess Pasena. This last would have sparked off to a squabble between them had not Saphestia intervening asked the tongue-tied rustic Doron his opinion about her choice. This provoked but a "blunt replie" from Doron who asked her whether in being a sheep she would be "a Ram or an Ewe". Consistently with the pastoral convention even Doron has been endowed with some music, but unlike Lodge whose Coridon and Montanus speak almost the same quality of verse as the sophisticated lovers, Doron's verse has a rustic vein, which the refined Melicertus detests.

Actually a line has been drawn between the shepherds and shepherdesses who have been born in the soil and the intruders who carry about them a court odour. Although the margin fades as we come to consider the language of Menaphon, who is recognized as the prince among the shepherds, there is no denying the superior refinement of Melicertus, which inclines Saphestia to change her mind in favour of him. In fact Melicertus' description of his mistress has a learned, sophisticated air about it : he compares his mistress with the "sun-bright Venus" whose "christall lookes the cloudie heavens do cleare", the "beauteous Thetis" wrapping the red body of the Titans. On the other hand, Menaphon's similes are homely having a mundane quality about them as when he compares his mistress' cheek to "ripened lillies, steeped in wine/Or fair pomegranate kernel washt in milke". And lower down in the scale, Doron's down-to-earth realism in the description of his mistress sounds so grotesque :

Thy lippes resemble two cowcumbers faire,  
Thy teeth like to the tuskes of the fattest swine,  
Thy speach is like the thunder in the aire :  
Would God thy toes, thy lips and all were mine.

No wonder that the disguised king Democles who acted as the judge to decide who should lead the assault gave his verdict in favour of Melicertus. For once at least linguistic ornamentation wins the laurels in

life as in love. It is indeed a part of the sophistication which Greene's enlightened readers might have enjoyed.

Nevertheless the attractiveness of Arcadian life which is free from the evils of the court is simultaneously recognized by a number of characters. For example, Democles, the disguised king, applauds the Arcadian blessings :

Arcadian swaines, whose wealth is content, whose labours are  
tempred with sweete loves, whose mindes aspyre not, whose  
thoughtes brooke no envie, only as rivalls in affection ..

And Saphestia, on her part, who had been the worst victim of a tyrannical court, shuns in horror what she calls "the hell of a court-life". But as her son Pleusidippus grows up somewhat too noble for the country surroundings, she feels the necessity of training him up for a more exalted station in life than Arcadia might afford.

On the whole Greene's attitude is more complex than that of Lodge. He does not borrow the pastoral convention uncritically. Despite its simplicity Arcadian life has also its crudities, and even its best specimen, Menaphon, after whom the novel has been named, accepts his defeat in verse-combat and ungrudgingly surrenders his claim over Saphestia to his sophisticated rival Melicertus. This is symbolic of Greene's attitude which his cultured readers might have appreciated.

## II

In passing from the prose-romances to Shakespeare's plays one is struck by the variety of Shakespeare's responses to his predecessors and also the complexity of his handling of the materials he borrowed from them. Shakespeare effaces the euphuism of style while following the matter of Lodge's *Rosalynde*, *Euphues Golden Legacie* in *As you Like It*, which, nonetheless, becomes much more complex because of the critical attitude he has added to it. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, on the other hand, Shakespeare reproduces the bombastic, grandiloquent, pedantic style, which sounds like a parody of euphuism, and also subtilizes the affectation through the manner and style of the sophisticated courtiers till the whole play becomes an attack on violation of nature by affectation of any kind, whether in speech or conduct.

Critics like W. L. Rushton<sup>13</sup> and T. W. Bond have traced the influence of Lyly on Shakespeare so far as the style or characterization is

concerned. While the former has discovered many parallel passages and even parallel characters in Shakespeare's plays, the latter has shown that the evidence of euphuistic style is more numerous in the middle period than in the earlier period. My purpose here is to show that Lyly's influence on Shakespeare was not restricted to language. Some of the dominant traits of euphuism, viz, antithesis and parallelism, are as important a part of the structural design of the plot of Lyly's novels as in that of Shakespeare's plays, particularly in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It*.

*Love's Labour's Lost* has the flimsiest plot, which is amplified by continual repetition, artificial balancing of group against group and by the interminable wordplay and straining after wit. Just as in Lyly, there are dialogue-scenes, which do not advance the action but which exist chiefly for dialogue, for the display of alliteration, punning and wordplay. Corresponding to Lyly's didacticism, which the young heroes defying provide the novel its antithetical pattern, there is the academic vow, a self-imposed penance in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The king of Navarre induces a group of noble lords to go with him into intellectual retreat. They will for the space of three years shun the company of women, eat only one meal a day, fast a day every week, and sleep not more than three hours in the night. Some of these prescriptions might have been derived directly from Lyly. Euphuus' 'Cooling carde for Philautus and all fond lovers' contains some of the items. For example, admonishing young men to forswear the company of women Euphuus asks them to

Follow Alexander which hearing the commendation and singular comelyness of the wife of Darius, so courageously withstood the assaults of fancie, that he would not so much as take a viewe of hir beautie : Imitate Cyrus, a king indued with such continencie yt hee loathed to look on the heavenly hewe of Panthea, and when Araspus tolde him that she excelled all mortall wightes in amiable shewe, by so much the more (sayde Cyrus) I ought to abstein from hir sight, for if I follow thy counsayle in going to hir, it may bee I shall desire to continue with hir, and by my lyghte affection neglect my serious affairs (*Complete works of John Lyly*, vol. I, edited by T. W. Bond, p. 250.)

In an earlier scene of the novel Euphuus has been warned against women by the old Eubulus almost in identical terms which he now repeats in painful remorse for the better guidance of his friend. As Euphuus in

his rejoinder to the old man had mocked him : "you would have all men olde as you are", so does Berowne attacks the central creed of the academicians on two grounds, first because it is against nature to starve the emotion in order to enlighten the mind, and secondly, because it is so unseasonable for young people :

Why should I joy in an abortive birth ?  
At Christmas I no more desire a rose  
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled shows ;  
But like of each thing that in season grows.

I. i. 104-7

Rather than shunning women or fasting himself Berowne would sooner study "where to meet some mistress fine" or "when he may well dine". Yet with the sure instinct that the whole academic discipline would fall through, the first item of which is going to be immediately broken as the French princess is due to visit Navarre for consulting state matters, Berowne allows himself to be caught in the toils of artifice just for the sake of enjoying the sport of it. So does Shakespeare duplicate the antithetical pattern to bring into focus the contrast between nature and artifice, realism and affectation on which the play is based.

What actually makes for the complexity in Shakespeare is his devising characters in groups, for example, the courtset and the country people with Armado acting as the link. This provides an opportunity for multiplication of parallel incidents, the alternating of one group with another and also for the episode of the misdelivery of letters by the blundering clown which gives the plot the only real complication it has.

No sooner is the King's proclamation abjuring the sight of women is made than Costard is discovered in the company of the rustic girl Jaquenetta—"sorted, consorted" contrary to proclamation "with a child of our grandmother Eve, a female". Look at the man's nonchalance when asked by the king if he has heard the proclamation—"I do confess much of the hearing it, but little of the marking of it". And the moment Costard has been sentenced to fasting with "bran and water" which he would fain exchange for "mutton and porridge", the other fellow, the accusing Spaniard to whose charge the rustic wench has been assigned falls in love with her, turns to sonneteering—"for I am for whole volumes in folio". These repeated infringements of the king's order show that none of the king's subjects took him seriously.

As to the sophisticated court group, as soon as they meet the French ladies they fall in love with them one after another, and as they fall in

love they at once turn to inditing sonnets, which each hiding from others is finally discovered—the whole thing looking like a ballet-dance—so symmetrical and repetitive it is ! They put on Muscovite masks, all of them, to gain access to their sweethearts, but repeat some conned phrases each to the wrong lady, for the ladies replying “sport with sport” have meanwhile exchanged their own masks. So they are only mocked at for their pains—“There’s no such sport as sport by sport o’thrown”. So, love’s labour’s lost—everything dashed like a “Christmas comedy”. The lovers would fain on their second visit exchange their “taffeta phrascos, silken terms precise” for “russet yeas, and honest kersey noes”, but the opportunity has been missed. There is the sudden incursion of the sad news that the French king has been dead and the ladies must hurry home. The lovers are put on trial for one full year—they must prove their earnestness by doing penance in a hermitage or visiting the sick in hospitals. So artifice defeats its own purpose. Even the French princess, who is nothing if not critical, comes to feel that her witticism has overreached itself and chides herself for “bending the working of the heart” for “fame’ sake”.

This has its farcical parallel in Armado’s transformation from a pompous rhetorician to a plain, almost monosyllabic lover—his amorous condescension for the sake of the country wench !

Maid !  
 Man !  
 I will visit thee at the lodge.  
 That’s hereby.  
 I know where it is situate.  
 Lord, how wise you are !  
 I will tell thee wonders.  
 With what face ?  
 I love thee.  
 So I heard you say.  
 And so, farewell.  
 Fair weather after you !

I. 2. 115

Armado too on his part has vowed to hold the plough for three years for the sweet love of Jaquenetta “that is quick by him”.

The play acquires a complexity by its element of cross-satire, which seems to underline the antithetical pattern. The sophisticated group of

lovers is mocked at for their pains by the mocking French wenches. Armado, the refined traveller from Spain, dignified and mock melancholy, makes himself ridiculous by his affectation of the court air. As the king and his bookmen ridicule the verbal affectation of Armado and Holofernes, they too are ridiculed by Costard whose remark that it is "the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh" is an unconscious criticism of the ascetic regulations formulated by the king. And even though Costard "infamonizes" Armado among the potentates Shakespeare actually gives him a dignity in humiliation. His affair with Jaquenetta is a parody of the courtly set, the only difference being that his is after all a love's labour's won as Costard saucily informs the audience in course of the anti-masque of the Nine Worthies. And the comedy of affectation coming to a close with the pastoral freshness points to the way Shakespeare's genius would be moving. In fact, *Love's Labour's Lost* is not only a satire of euphuism ; the satire is directed against Lylyan sophistication in general, both of manners and style.

Just as there are two styles of wooing in the play—the sophisticated and the plain : "the taffeta phrases and silken terms precise" and "the russet yeas and honest kersey noes", the play has, generally speaking, two styles. Apparently, Shakespeare gives his verdict in favour of the plain style, his superfine courtiers—Proteus, Cassio, Parolles and Osric having been variously ridiculed. Dr Landmann thinks that the general moral of the play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, is that we are to recognize the homely necessity of fact and natural limitation.

"No egma, no riddle, no l'envoy, no salve in them all, Sir'.  
O Sir, plantain, a plain plantain... "a marvellous good  
neighbour, faith, and a very good bowler : but, for Alisander,  
—alas, you see how 'tis—a little O'erparted"

LLL : III. 1. 62 & V.2.575.

But the question of style in Shakespeare is not so easily answered. Many characteristics of style are caricatured in Shakespeare : poverty of phrase in Nym, bombast like Marlowe's in Pistol, overnicety of distinction in Launcelot, verbosity in Polonius. And as to euphuism in the true sense of the term we have a parody of it in Falstaff :

Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time  
but also how thou art accompanied : for though thou  
eat Camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, y  
youth, the more it is wasted the sooner it wears... The





Note the antithesis, alliteration in the above lines, and as for playing with words, punning etc. there cannot be a better instance than the following :

Light seeking light doth light of light beguile :  
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,  
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.

1. 1. 77

Coming now to the ink-horn decoration, the love of long words which Ascham, for example, has damned as "indenture English" and "strange and inkhorne termes" in Edward Hall, we have a parody of it in Costard's remark :

Moth : They have been at a great feast of languages, and  
stolen the scraps.

Costard : O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of  
words. I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee  
for a word ; for thou art not so long by the head  
as *honorificabilitudinitatibus* : thou art easier swallow-  
ed than a flap-dragon.

V. 1. 31

Nevertheless Costard, like most Elizabethans, was enchanted with the music of learned words even though the meaning might not be clear to him.

Remuneration : O, thats the Latin word for three farthings--  
remuneration--'What's the price of this inkle ?'--'One penny'  
--'No, I'll give you a remuneration' : Why it carries it.  
Remuneration.

III. 1. 122

And at the lowest level this love of long words descends to malapropism, of which one of the earliest examples is, of course, Dull :

I myself reprehend his own person, for I am his Grace's  
tharborough : but I would see his own person in flesh and  
blood.

1.1.181

At the higher level the pretension to sophistication has been variously parodied through Armado, Holofernes and Nathaniel. For example, the love of synonyms and the use of learned words to lend a false dignity to simple things (the last borrowed from Sidney) may be illustrated by the following speeches of Armado and Holofernes :

I did encounter that obscene and most preposterous event,  
that draweth from my snow-white pen the ebon-coloured  
ink, which thou viewest, beholdest, surveyest, or seest.

I. 1.231.

Sorted and consorted, contrary to thy established proclaimed  
edict and continent canon.

I. 1.244

The posterior of the day, most generous Sir, is liable, congruent and measurable for the afternoon ; the word is well culled, chose, sweet and apt, I do assure you, Sir, I do assure.

V. 1.76

This is a gift that I have, simple, simple ; a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions ; these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion.

IV. 2.59

But when all is said about the verbal affection caricatured in the play, it becomes an intoxication with Shakespeare till, as Pater says, it turns into a "delicate raillery of Shakespeare himself at his chosen manner".

*As you Like It* is generally regarded as a pastoral comedy based on Lodge's romance, *Rosalynde*, and Shakespeare's indebtedness to Lyly's *Euphues* is little recognized even though the full title of Lodge's romance is 'Rosalynde : Euphues Golden Legacie' in which Euphues is the supposed author of the tale which professes to have been "found after his death in his cell at Silixedra" (Title-page of the 1952 edition). T. W. Bond, in his edition of Lyly's works, does not only discover many parallel passages of Lyly's novel in Shakespeare's plays but also notices a parallel between the Lylyan hero, Euphues and "the melancholy Jaques". The passage is worth quoting :

Like Euphues Jaques has made false steps in youth, which have somewhat darkened his views of life : like Euphues, he conceals under a veil of sententious satire a real goodness of heart, shown in his action towards Audrey and Touchstone. A traveller, like Euphues or like Cassander, he has a 'melancholy of his own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects' and is prepared, as his prototype actually does, to lecture on every conceivable theme. He will moralize every spectacle, and, free charter given,

Will through and through

Cleanse the foul body of the infected world.

Finally, like Euphues, he is something out of harmony with youthful pastimes and the life of luxury and dalliance. While the others are busy with wedding festivities and their return to court, Jaques bethinks him of matter to be learned from a converted duke, as Euphues learned from Fidus or the hermit Cassander and retires like Euphues to Silixsedra, to indulge his melancholy at the deserted cave. These resemblances and the full title of Lodge's novel considered, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that we have in Jaques a reproduction of, and a verdict on, the hero of Lyly's famous work.

Unlike Euphues, however, Jaques has no friend, though his company is sincerely sought by the Senior Duke, another philosopher in the play.

I love to cope him in these sullen fits,  
For then he's full of matter.

But when after having met the motley, Jaques has a sudden fit of reforming "the foul body of the infected world" the Duke at once throws cold water on his enthusiasm. And as the philosopher-Duke reassumes his ducal authority Jaques too has no need of him any more and turns to the new convert in quest of "much matter to be heard and learned" from him. Actually Jaques has been intended by Shakespeare to play no active role in the play except as a moralizer or commentator. Like Euphues and all other Lylyan moralists whose counsels none of the young people cared to heed, Jaques is an ineffective moralizer, who is summarily dismissed alike by Orlando and Rosalind as they severally meet him before their own meeting. Jaques has however a kindred spirit in Touchstone, the wise fool, and once at least in the whole play is the melancholy man so amused that he laughs like a chanticleer one full hour as he hears the motley moralize on the clock. The Senior Duke on his part appreciates Touchstone, as he does Jaques, because of his wit which he presents in the garb of folly, his "stalking horse". Just as the fool uses every opportunity for a joke Jaques also takes his chance to lecture on every conceivable theme. Between the two, the licensed fool and the wise railer, Shakespeare has established another point of contact as when he makes Olivia in *Twelfth Night* rebuke Malvolio for his incapacity to enjoy the innocent joke of the clown :

...there is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail ; nor no raillery in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

Jaques and Touchstone, the two new characters added by Shakespeare to the story that he borrowed from Lodge, have minimum contribution to the plot of the play, though between them they appropriate, next to Rosalind, the largest number of lines. Mutually opposed on many fundamental points, they provide counter-points, to almost every attitude or view presented in the play. Thus the recurrence of antithesis, a typical Lylyan device, is integrated into a dialectic pattern which characterizes the structure of the play. Evidently, Shakespeare has given a new dimension to Lodge's story by raising it to a philosophical level, and here one can detect the influence of Lyly.

Among the major comedies of Shakespeare *As you Like It* has a dearth of action. Shakespeare has omitted one important event viz, Saladyne's rescue of Afinda in his version of Lodge's romance, but he has enhanced the scope of parallelism by making the two dukes, the usurper and the usurped, brothers to provide a contrast to the wicked Oliver and the magnanimous Orlando. Even the three pairs of Lodge's lovers have a fourth pair added to them in Touchstone and Audrey. But while in *Love's Labour's Lost*, or for that matter in Lodge's romance too, the lovers repeat the steps one another as in a well-ordered dance, the quartet of lovers in *As you like It* seem to be doing the same thing though they are doing something different... In the fifth act the lovers singing—

And so am I for Phebe  
And I for Ganymede  
And I for Rosalind  
And I for no woman

echo one another but they mean quite different things. The apparent symmetries involving all sorts of asymmetries make for a complexity of design.

Here, the role of Touchstone is to be particularly recognized because it is he above all others who charges the play with a critical spirit. The moment Rosalind is sentimentally affected either at the sight of the forest of Arden or by the pangs of the sighing lover Silvius, the 'material fool' takes her up sharply, remarking that he was better when at the court because there is something like home-comfort which the forest cannot afford and also recalling, at the next turn, his affliction when as a lover of Jane Smile he broke his sword on a stone taking it for a hypothetical rival. His parody of Orlando's verse which he compares to the butter woman's rank to market, his bantering description of his own affair with Audrey in which he compares himself with the amorous Ovid—the exiled poet

among the Goths and he among the goats of Audrey—punctures the time-worn poetical-pastoral convention.

Never more does Rosalind reveal her heart-pangs except when she is alone with Celia. Her delicate pretences to her lover, her masquerades, her critical dissection of love's central creed as a madness deserving the whip and simultaneous perception that "whippers are in love too" distinguish her from the disdainful mistress which literary convention would have her play. Remarkable in this connection is the fact that many of the warnings uttered by the Lylyan moralists against the wiles of women are repeated by herself ("the wiser, the waywarder") to damp her lover's enthusiasm. Her purpose in doing this is to test if her lover's passion is as deep as her own, which however cannot be sounded because it "hath an unknown bottom like the bay of Portugal". Though herself deeply involved, she has the dramatic capacity to project herself in her lover in whom she expects the devotion of Troilus, a Leander. Yet she makes a sportive mockery of the romantic heroes themselves as she does of the wicked bastard of Venus, Cupid, whose own blindness causes blindness in the lovers including herself. This sportiveness coupled with passion, detachment in spite of involvement gives her a complexity, which is not to be found elsewhere in Shakespeare's heroines, not to speak of Lodge's, whose Rosalynd at her best warns herself against the dangerous infatuation when feeling the warmth of it in herself :

Have minde on the forepassed fortunes, feare the worst, and  
intangle not they selfe with present fancies : least loving in  
hast thou repent thee at leasure.

It is through Rosalind's unbiased, critical eyes again that Shakespeare makes us see the other love-affairs in the correct perspective. The suddenness of Celia's passion for Oliver and his for her—an extreme instance of love's blindness, would not seem so queer that it actually is, but for Rosalind's humorous description of it in terms of "the fight of two rams or Caesar's thrasonical brag of 'I came, saw and overcame'". Similarly, her scathing ridicule of the sighing shepherd Silvius—"it is such fools as you/That makes the world full of ill-favoured children", following a common rustic girl "like foggy south puffing with wind and rain", makes the conventional love postures seem so absurd. By contrast Rosalind's own affair with Orlando appears somewhat near to life. Orlando, however, displays many of the conventional love poses : writing poems and playing "the unfortunate he" he was found under a tree "like a dropped acorn". But the general quality of his 'bad verse

lends itself so easily to Touchstone's parody that one might suspect that he has not been "exalted" in the traditional way, and he has at least one realistic quality of unpunctuality. Twice does he fail to keep his appointment with Rosalind and once alone he has the real explanation of an accident, but on the second occasion he has nothing more to say than "My fair Rosalind I come within an hour of my promise". As to the affair between Touchstone and Audrey we have the realist's own description of it ("As the ox has his bow, sir, the horse his curb.....so man hath his desires") as a downright sensuality, to which he would give a large scope by a perfunctory marriage but for Jaques' timely intervention.

It is significant that Jaques, in whom T. W. Bond has seen a prototype of the Lylyan hero Euphues, has nothing to do in the main affair of the romantic comedy except preventing the bad marriage of Touchstone with Audrey. In Lyly's novel the hero's own bitter experience in love forms the background of his disquisitions on love. Jaques, too, had his sensual past, but it is only incidentally referred to by the Senior Duke. Twice does Jaques encounter the lovers, Orlando and Rosalind, but every time he is dismissed, worsted in wit-combat before he can even present his point of view. The situations need a close scrutiny. On the first occasion he attempts to broach the theme of love by asking Orlando not to mar the barks of trees with writing verses on them, showing his dislike for his sweetheart's name and even calling Orlando a fool. But Jaques is dumbfounded at the lover's surly remarks :

I pray you, mar no moe of my verses with reading them  
ill-favouredly.

There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened.

He (the fool) is drowned in the brook : look but in, and you  
shall see him.

Jaques has his next wit-combat with Rosalind, the theme being his 'melancholy', which is the result of "the contemplation of my travel". Rosalind takes him up sharply commenting that the experience is not worth the price he has paid for it—"sold your own lands to see other men's and then, to have seen much and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands".

Farewell, Monsieur Traveller : look you lisp and wear  
strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country,  
be out of love with your nativity and almost chide God for

making you that countenance you are, or I will scarce think  
that you have swam in a gondola. IV. 1.28

All these tirades against foreign travel are virtually an echo of Lyly's Callemachus and the old hermit. Only the position has been reversed with also the tone. What was a sententious moral in Lyly's old didacticians has taken on a derisive tone with the young mockers. There are traces also of Euphues' 'cooling card' derived from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*<sup>14</sup> in Rosalind's mocking enumeration of the remedies of love with which she claims to have cured her young suitor of his "mad humour of love" till passing on to "a living humour of madness" he preferred to "live in nook merely monastic". This is how the Lylyan didacticism has suffered a sea-change in Shakespeare.

In a romantic comedy like *As You Like It* it is Touchstone with his critical acceptance of life rather than Jaques with his cynical rejection of it that has an appropriate place. Here the moralist's role is beyond doubt unenviable: that of a mocker mocked. In fact, the sermonizing moralist has seldom any status in Shakespeare. Nevertheless Jaques has his worth appreciated at least by one man in the play, viz., the Senior Duke though he happens to be the main target of Jaques' cynical banter. Fundamentally different, they have one point of similarity: the Duke too has something of the moralizer in himself who finds "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks/Sermons in stones and good in everything". And Amiens congratulates his master on his delighted acceptance of the new condition in the forest, from which however he returns to the court when opportunity comes for him to resume his ducal responsibility. Jaques, on the other hand, is temperamentally a euphuist who has stepped into the Arcadian world where he can hardly acclimatize himself. Yet he is out of love with the court itself, which the euphuistic heroes also shun to retire to a cave as Jaques does. Shakespeare has consistently used this melancholy moralist to counter the conventional attitudes to the forest and the court so that the play acquires a complexity not to be found elsewhere. For example, Jaques sees in the deer driven by the hunters from their native haunts in the forest the evils of the court repeated, the Senior Duke acting as the usurper like his brother who has driven him away from the court. The wounded deer deserted by its companions puts him in mind of the bankrupt neglected by the wealthy burghers, and its shedding tears in the needless stream recalls the ways of the wordly men making their testament in favour of the man who has already enough.



Ever since Theocritus and Virgil the bliss of Arcadian life has been recognized by poets and moralists. It is not only "free from the evils of the envious court, it has its positive charm with the stream babbling by on the margin of which there grows the olive grove where convenient caves lie ready to receive the truants from the court. There are the outlaws in the forest who "fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world"—hunting deer, enjoying their alfresco meals under the shades of trees with warbling birds to whose sweet notes they turn their song. But actually as Amiens sings his song inviting people to come under the greenwood tree shunning ambition, Jaques suggests the addition of a new stanza, the import of which is that to abandon "wealth and ease" is the act of an ass or fool. And there is also Touchstone to philosophize on the clock, which being a symbol of social life man has to live with others is naturally useless in the forest : so the satire is indeed doubled. In another scene, after the killing of the deer the hunters go in a triumphal procession, which is a ritual of the forest, but Jaques is still there to suggest that the successful hunter should be crowned with horns.

Coming now from the intruders to the real inhabitants of the forest we meet the rustics like the tongue-tied William and the sluttish wench Audrey, who have been placed over against the pastoral lovers like Phebe and Silvius in order to show that the real shepherds and shepherdesses are far different from what the poetical-pastoral convention would have them to be. Even Corin, the counterpart of the old Virgilian shepherd, is no verse-maker but a homespun old fellow whose only pride is to see his ewes and rams well-fed. But Shakespeare has endowed him with a point of view which coming in conflict with Touchstone's adds to the complexity of the play. Their dialectics on the comparative merit of court life and forest life leads to no clear preference in favour of either, each being at bottom the same. Though the wickedness of court life is never for a moment lost sight of, it has also its opportunities for real service which induce the truants to return there with of course the solitary exception of Jaques who has never been at home anywhere. While Lodge on the one hand, and Sidney and Greene on the other, have their marked preference for one way of life, Shakespeare's attitude is double-edged : he shows the virtues and vices of the country and the court leaving it to the readers to make their own choice, as they like it.

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- \* Compare Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* : ..... 'though the Camomill, the more it is trodden and pressed down, the more it spreadeth, yet the violet the often it is handled and touched, the sooner it withereth and decayeth'
- The Complete works of John Lyly*,  
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- "Hee that toucheth pitche shall be defiled".. ... *Ibid* ; P.250.
- \* \* This point has been derived from Harold Jenkins' essay on *As you Like It*. *Shakespeare Survey* (8)

# SHAKESPEARE TRANSLATIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BENGAL

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REENA GHOSH

## I

In the middle of the 18th Century, from the ships carrying Clive and his associates belonging to the Hon'ble John Company, Shakespeare may be said to have landed on the bank of the Ganges. Ever since his domain has kept extending and getting consolidated. In spite of great dissimilarities of life and social outlook, the Bengali mind ultimately installed Shakespeare in the pantheon of its literary gods. The whole of the 19th century relates the history of the assimilation of Shakespeare by the Bengali mind.

A good many "writers" of the company were opportunistic, greedy and given to misadventure. Besides, some of them were quite uneducated and unscrupulous. But as a class, these writers enjoyed drama and they established the first stage, Old Playhouse, in the year 1753. David Garrick, at the request of some highly-placed employees of John Company trained and sent one of his disciples to stage *Richard III* and *Hamlet*. New Playhouse or Calcutta Theatre, established in 1775, was also a result of their endeavour. As a matter of fact, the popularity of Shakespeare amongst the Bengali in the early 19th Century developed through their introduction to these Shakespearean performances.

The 19th century popularity of Shakespeare followed certain definite trends. Newly established schools encouraged reading and staging Shakespeare. The amateur and public stage freely adapted Shakespeare in the original as well as in translation. Last but not least, the influence of Shakespeare left an indelible mark on the contemporary Bengali drama.

Shakespearean drama was included in the curriculum of the institutions established in the 19th century, like David Drummond's Academy, Sherborne's School in Chitpore, David Hare's School at Goldighi, Rev. Duff's institute at Hedua, and Oriental Seminary of Gourmohan Adhya at Chitpore. Thus the Bengali mind was allowed to move on beyond the

utilitarian, commercial facade of the Company into the Sanctum of English culture. Derozio as a boy in 1822 recited Shylock in David Drummond's Academy. Madhusudan as a boy in 1834 acted as Duke of Gloucester in *Henry VI*.

Several performances of Shakespeare were held at Calcutta Theatre, Chowringhee Theatre, the A'haeneum and Sans Souci. In 1848, Vaishnav Charan Adhya did *Othello* at Sans Souci Theatre. This was the first time that a Bengali took part in a Shakespearean play. In 1832, *Julius Caesar* was staged on the first night of performance at Hindoo Theater, founded by Prasanna Kumar Tagore. Peary Mohan Bose arranged a performance of *Julius Caesar* at his own Jorasanko residence in 1853. In 1874, *Rudrapāl*, in other words *Macbeth*, translated by Haralal Ray, was staged there in 1875. Special mention should be made of *Macbeth*, translated by Girish Chandra, which was performed in 1893. *Harirāj*, an adaptation of *Hamlet* by Nagendranath Choudhury, was staged by Amarendranath Datta at Classic Theatre in 1905.

In the 19th century, there was hardly any litterateur worth his name, who did not write on Shakespeare. All of them—Madhusudan, Vidya-sagar, Ramendra Sundar, Haraprasad Shastri, Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath—discussed Shakespeare. And besides, those who were not primarily engaged in writing, such as Vivekananda, Brojendranath Seal, Acharya .Profulla Chandra, Sri Aurobindo—a various assortment of talents—wrote on Shakespeare. Shakespeare was an arch not only for translators and critics, but for dramatists as well. Even in most writings other than drama, the influence of Shakespeare was far from negligible. Thus while Bengali drama was to some extent seasoned and decorated in the all-but-forgotten traditions of Sanskrit drama, its ingredients came mainly from Shakespeare.

## II

A. Monckton appears to be the first translator of Shakespeare in Bengali. In the *Annals of Fort William* by T. Roebuck, it has been recorded that Monckton translated *The Tempest* in 1809. No copy seems to have survived. It looks like a piece of paradox that Fort William, a symbol of ambitious colonialism, should not only initiate and encourage practice in Bengali composition, but inspire the first Bengali translation of Shakespeare and that, too, by a foreigner.

Following this isolated attempt, a fairly continuous process of

development in Shakespeare translation can be traced from 1848 onwards. Between 1848 and 1859, that is, in the pre-Madhusudan period, the translators attempted to popularize the stories of Shakespeare amongst readers unacquainted with English. They did not consider that their contemporary readers would be able to appreciate the proper translations of Shakespearean drama. They wanted to lay the foundations of Shakespeare translation in the future years. For this purpose, Gurudas Hazra, Muktaram Vidyabagish and Edward Roer chose Lamb's *Tales* as most suitable for translation.

Gurudas Hazra translated *Romeo and Juliet*. Muktaram Vidyabagish translated twenty of Lamb's *Tales* and Edward Roer, nine. It is significant that none of these translators Indianized the names of the characters and places in their writings. They were remarkable for their lucidity and loyalty to the original.

Harachandra Ghose was the first to claim the honour of being the forerunner of a long list of translators of Shakespearean drama. In 1854, he translated *The Merchant of Venice* as *Bhānumatī-Chittabilās* and in 1864, *Romeo and Juliet* as *Charumukha-Chittaharā*. As translator he wrote in the preface that he had made some changes and additions to make the writings suitable for the Indian taste. Unfortunately, the name of Harachandra Ghosh has been just recorded in the history of literature; the literary excellence of his works has not been recognized because of an excessive use of 'mimicry and drollery' (as defined by Lebedeff), well-worn conventions of Sanskrit drama, and inappropriate language.

In respect of the first original drama in Bengali, it appears that both *Bhadrarjuna* by Taracharan Sikdar and *Kirti-bilas* by G. C. Gupta, were published in 1852. Taracharan Sikdar wrote in the preface that he composed his writing according to the norms of European drama. *Bhadrārjuna* was written on the model of Shakespeare's romantic comedy. Everywhere—in the selection of subject, in the development of the theme, in its technique—the influence of Shakespeare is apparent. In the preface to *Kirtibilās*, a detailed justification of tragedy and its adaption in Bengali literature has been discussed in detail. The characters and episodes of *Kirtibilās*, have a great similarity with those of *Hamlet* and further, the speech of Meghnath echoes the dialogue of Pompey in *Measure for Measure* (IV. ii).

Between 1859 and 1872, i.e. till the establishment of the public stage or during the period when Madhusudan figured prominently, there was an array of translators ranging from the indifferent to the talented.

Madhusudan was the first to compose Bengali drama successfully by adopting the western technique. *Kṛiṣṇakumārī* was the first successful tragedy in Bengali drama. The protagonist Bhim Singh and Balendra Singh decidedly resemble Lear (*King Lear*) and Bastard (*King John*). The old man's dialogue in the second act, first scene of *Mayakanan*, is a translation of Act I, scene i of *Midsummer Night's Dream* (22-27). Finally, the tragic concept of Ravana's character is primarily and basically Shakespearean.

During this period only translations of the original texts came forth. Every translation shows an adaptation to Indian culture. Original writings in Bengali deriving their inspiration from Shakespeare flourished while Bankim Chandra, Dinabandhu and others started gaining prominence.

In 1868 *Kusum-Kumari* by Chandrakali Ghose and *Suśīlā-Vīrsinha* by Satyendranath Tagore were published. Both were Indianised translations of *Cymbeline*. Satyendranath Tagore's translation is free from the usual excesses of sentimentalism and melodramatic expression of current Bengali drama. Hemchandra Bandopadhyay translated two Shakespearean plays, *The Tempest* (Nalini-Vasanta) and *Romeo and Juliet* about this time. Both these dramas have flow and fluency but their grotesque language, rustic humour, and crude reflection of contemporaneity make them unpleasant reading. Particularly in *Romeo and Juliet*, these faults are prominent.

In respect of the literary translation of Shakespeare, Vidyasagar is a major figure. The greater part of his writing is translation. *Bhrantivilās* (*Comedy of Errors*) by Vidyasagar is truthful in sense and language, and is lucid and artistic.

Shakespeare's genius gradually pervaded widely and deeply, even in the field of original Bengali drama. The intense tragedy of *Vidhabā Vibāha* by Umesh Chandra Mitra, written in 1868, is undoubtedly a result of Shakespeare's influence. Characterization in this drama is also reminiscent of the Shakespearean style. Tarak Chandra Churamoni wrote *Sapatnī* in 1858 which ends in comedy, but its whole atmosphere is tragic and it can be termed as a 'dark comedy'.

The National Theatre was established in Calcutta in 1872. What had been but a meagre trickle of dramatic writing now broadened into a wide stream of dramatic compositions by various dramatists as Dinabandhu Mitra, Girishchandra Ghose, Dwijendralal Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and others.

Much of Shakespeare was translated during this part of the 19th century. The greater tragedies of Shakespeare were translated more than once, while the comedies were not left out. It is to be noted however that most of these were Indianised adaptations, and translators, in most cases, perhaps took more liberties than were warranted.

At first, naturally the audience at the performance of Shakespeare's plays was limited to the highly educated : those who knew the English language and literature, and knew them well. But after 1872, the audience expanded mainly owing to the fact that less-educated people, who used to patronise Yātrā and Pāñchali, now came to appreciate Shakespeare's plays. That is why a faithful translation of *Macbeth* by Girish Chandra attracted a contemporary comment by the journal *Friend of India*. The performance of *Macbeth* marks an epoch in the annals of the Native Stage. Yet Grish Chandra found the auditorium practically empty at the time of the performance. On the other hand, the Indianized adaptation of *Hamlet* as 'Harirāj' was popularly accepted when staged by Amarendranath Datta in 1897. Perhaps that explains why virtually none of the translators of this epoch chose to translate Shakespeare straight.

Many original dramas were written at this stage when along with the writings of Grish Chandra, Dwijendralal, Rabindranath and such other talented writers, numerous common or garden writers also joined in to help. The influence of Shakespeare became wider and deeper in the field of original drama. The technique of Shakespearean drama was accepted and imitated in nearly all such compositions. The five-act structure, the presentation of the story, the co-ordination between the main plot and sub-plots, the use of verse at emotional moments and of prose during ordinary conversation became an accepted common practice. The superficial aspects of Shakespeare's plays became the part and parcel of Bengali drama but only a few writers succeeded in assimilating Shakespeare's tragic view.

Bankim Chandra never translated any of Shakespeare's plays and he was not a dramatist either. But Shakespeare's influence appears to have been most completely absorbed by Bankim Chandra, as manifested successfully in his literary compositions. This influence is not synonymous with unqualified imitation or adaptation but it may be compared with the lighting up of a torch of one genius kindled by that of a fellow-genius. The main contents of Shakespeare as well as of Bankim Chandra may be described as the unfathomable power of Nature over human life

and the manifestation of the unravelled mystery of the ultimate truth in life.

The works of Dinabandhu Mitra, the great playwright after Madhusudan, mainly reveal the influence of Shakespearian comedy. The real attraction of Dinabandhu's plays is the easy-flowing, glittering and bubbling humour of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Comedy of Errors* etc. Moreover, the unforgettable characterisation of Nimchand (*Sadhabār Ekādasi*) is mainly Shakespearian.

The western dramatic technique was employed in the plays of Jyotirindranath very deftly. His writing is completely free from the usual sentimental melodramatic effect of the Bengali drama. The influence of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on *Svapnamayī* is apparent. His historical plays are likely to remind one of the Shakespearian historical plays. His *Julius Caesar* is a true example of successful Shakespeare-translation in Bengali.

It would appear from the survey of the complete works of Girish Chandra, one-time monarch of the Bengali stage, that they imitate the externalities of Shakespearian drama. The tragic view is found missing in Girish Chandra. On many occasions countless deaths and lamentations beyond measure become the concluding feature of his plays. But his *Macbeth* is at once an example of his accomplishment as a translator and of the translatability of Shakespeare in Bengali. This piece of translation reveals facets of Girish Chandra's dramatic genius which his critics have hardly touched upon.

Rabindranath's many-splendoured brilliance became apparent even in his younger age, especially in his translation of Shakespeare. Unfortunately, only a part of the translated *Macbeth* has been recovered. The poems of *Saṁsava Sangīt* in *Achalita Samgraha*, 1st part, also show a profound Shakespearian influence.

The plays written by Rabindranath in the earlier years bear the easily discernible marks of Shakespearian influence. Such influence is almost obvious in his two full-blooded tragedies, *Rājā O Rāṇī* and *Bisarjana*, and also in romantic comedies, *Śeṣrakṣā* and *Chirakumār Sabhā*. Jaisingha of *Bisarjana* and Kumarsen of *Rājā O Rāṇī* have been created after the image of the most popular and most discussed character of *Hamlet*. However, the intellectual aspect of Hamlet's character is missing. Again, the character of the crowd of the Shakespearian plays has been adapted by Rabindranath even in his symbolic plays. In the field of the novel also, viz. *Chôkher Bāli* and *Chaturanga*, the impact of powerful



passion as in Shakespeare can be found (the characters of Vinodini and Damini could have been born of the spirit of Cleopatra).

Efforts to imitate Shakespeare have been made in Bengali drama for a long time. The playwrights preceding Dwijendralal, nearly without exception, studied the Shakespearean dramatic technique. This technique has been best adopted by Dwijendralal. Such Shakespearean features as high tempo, intense suspense, the tension born of internal and external conflict, the poetic quality of dialogue have been faithfully imitated by him. He discards the occult and any excess of devotional sentiment in dramas based on legends and truthfully presents historical forces in his historical dramas. Here he is clearly indebted to Shakespeare.

Of the Shakespeare-translations during 19th Century following Dwijendralal, *Naidāgh Niśīṭh Swapna* by Nabin Chandra Sen is notable. Easy-flowing expression, variety of metres and simple fun combine to make it pleasant reading.

Some stray attempts at translations from Shakespeare were also made during this time. Haranchandra Rakshit very diligently narrated the stories of Shakespeare's plays in three volumes. These stories are faithful translations. All such translations may not quite appeal to a 'superior' critic, but they show a definite trend: the adaptation of Shakespeare to an alien culture and climate.

### III

Between the English language and the Bengali there are no linguistic affinities except some distant ones, for both of them belong to the Indo-Aryan group. But in the domain of creativity perhaps every national mind, however narrow or chauvinistic, partakes of the universal human mind. Of this universal mind, Shakespeare was perhaps the greatest partaker. There, we feel, the Bengali mind and Shakespeare meet, and even fraternise.

In Shakespeare-translations, one should be faithful to the original. But too much of fidelity does justice neither to the original nor to the translation.

It is necessary to be careful about language and its nuances in translating Shakespeare. Since the translation is that of drama, it must have the necessary theatrical qualities. Shakespearean dialogue should be translated into proper Bengali conversations. Words having more than one

meaning or words with various associations in the original should in translation retain their ambiguity and richness as far as possible. Hemchandra's translation of *Romeo and Juliet* illustrates a major inadequacy in this respect. Mercutio's aristocratic lineage and education can be understood easily in Shakespeare's text but not so in the translation. Carelessness on the translator's part makes Mercutio use a language fit for lower classes and so the character has been altogether changed. Further, the suggestiveness of Cupid's arrow could be rendered in Bengali, but Hemchandra never paid any heed to this. Likewise, the famous moon-light scene in *The Merchant of Venice* has lost all its beauty in Harachandra Ghose's translation for its inappropriate language.

It is very difficult, almost impossible, to transplant the syntax of Shakespeare's language and his idiom. The use of the syntax of the Bengali language and Bengali idioms is necessary, but this should not destroy the flavour of the original. In Shakespeare, there is much idiomatic expression and rhetoric which makes a translator's work very difficult.

There is difference in vocabulary, in structure, in syntax and also in idiom between these two languages. Nagendranath Sarbadhikari's inability to properly translate Prospero's speech to Miranda in *The Tempest* (I, i) illustrates such a difficulty. Such speeches as Lady Macbeth's—

Memory, the warder of the brain  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
a limbeck only

Or such lines in *Hamlet*—

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles...

are very difficult to translate in three lines in Bengali. If the speech is made longer in the translation, the concentration of the original is destroyed.

The ideal of Shakespeare-translation should be, as Gogol said, like a transparent pane of glass. Contemporary life should enliven it and the language should bear contemporaneity.<sup>1</sup>

As in all other translations, the writer and the reader should come closer in Shakespeare-translation also.

The language of a Shakespeare-translation in Bengali must be

Bengali in its proper sense so that the reader would not be always conscious of its being a translation.

In Charuchandra Mukhopadhyaya's translation of *The Tempest* (*Prakṛti*) Prospero's speech to Ferdinand has been exactly rendered, but some words and expressions do not follow the nature and style of the Bengali language.

In Shakespear-translations, usually a sentence or a phrase is taken as the unit, but sometimes the whole work is taken as the unit. Frequently, these three methods are used together in different proportions depending on the nature of the work to be translated.

#### IV

The greatest difficulty for the Shakespeare-translators was the social difference between Elizabethan England and nineteenth-century Bengal. Lady Olivia, the heroine of *Twelfth Night*, speaks about her beauty to Viola, disguised as a man (I, V, II. 225-234). In Bengali society, it is unthinkable. Madhusudan said of nineteenth-century society, "It would shock the audience if I were to introduce a female (a virtuous one) discussing with a man, unless that man be her husband, brother or father.....".

There is also much difference between concepts of morality as existed in 19th century Bengal and Elizabethan England. The Brahminic ideal would not tolerate the saying of Gloucester about his son Edmund (1, 1). In Chandrakali Ghose's *Kusumkumari* (*Cymbeline*) this difference in morality overwhelms Dwandapriya (Iachimo) with respect as he sees in Imogen an embodiment of chastity.

Every country has its own sense of humour according to the environment, social and moral outlook. In India, provinces have different senses of humour. There is doubt about the translatability of the conversation between Beatrice and Leonato (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II, i, ll. 27-34) and the conversation between Touchstone and Jacques (*As You Like It*, V, iii, ll. 65-77) in Bengali. An exact translation of these portions does not seem very possible and if translated it would not be enjoyed by the Bengali readers.

In Shakespeare's drama, there are often references to old stories and characters. These are well known in England. But the Bengali readers

and audience do not know much of these references. So these should be left out or instead, some Indian story of the same type could be inserted. Foot-notes could also be given.

In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius says of Caesar to Brutus,

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs,.....(I, ii, pp. 135-137)

To bring out the sense of ironical praise in 'bestride' and 'colossus' in Bengali is quite impossible.

Natural differences in these two countries also make the task difficult. In Othello's speech before murdering Desdemona (V, ii, ll 3-5) two words, 'snow' and 'alabaster', are used ; they are not very much known to a Bengali. In Iachimo's speech (*Cymbeline*, II, ii, ll. 15-16), lily is not a flower of the typical Bengali household, and its association is not the same as of lotus.

In Shakespeare, sometimes, some words or titles have been used which cannot be replaced or translated in Bengali. As in *The Twelfth Night*, Malvolio's use of yellow-stocking and cross-garter is not a Bengali practice. The words Earl, Duke etc. have no synonyms in Bengali. The translator has to accept English words or use equivalent phrase.

All languages consist of a systemetically organized set of oral-aural symbols. English and Bengali have different speech-rhythms. This is a great handicap for successful translations. Hamlet's speech (III, iv, ll. 53-67) becomes different in Bengali translation. It becomes either loose in structure or goes far from the original. This is evident in Lalit Mohan Adhikary's and Nagendranath Choudhury's translations of *Hamlet*.

Both these translations show that differences in speech-rhythm stand in the way.

There are two sides of a language, the referential and the emotive. Many a time in Shakespeare-translations, synonyms of English words or phrases could not be found. So the translators sometimes rejected them or explained them in a longer sentence. So either the expression of the original was changed or the Bengali idiom was not used.

In Shakespeare, the second person singular number is used in addressing a person. But in Bengali, this sort of address is not in use.

Joined verbs are a characteristic feature of the Bengali language. Most of the verbs are formed with *kr* (to do) and *bhū* (=to be). It

makes Bengali soft and sonorous, but loose in structure. Madhusudan used nominal verbs to remove this. But Shakespeare-translators have not been so careful and conscious as Madhusudan was.

To avoid the looseness Madhusudan used many Sanskrit words. Moreover, he used many Sanskrit and unused Bengali words to give a high tone to his blank verse and add a vigour and energy to the Bengali words. But this has not been followed by the nineteenth-century Shakespeare-translators.

The fourteen letters of a Bengali blank-verse line cannot follow the rhythm of the English iambic pentametre or tetrametre. Longer lines are needed here. The rhythm *Mahāpayār*, created by Rabindranath, is more useful in translating Shakespeare. Even before Rabindranath, Jyotirindranath used blank-verse with 18 letters in his *Julius Caesar*. He experimented with four kinds of blank verse. But unfortunately the Shakespeare-translators have not accepted his medium in their work.

Between the Shakespeare of England and the Bengali mind, there lies the distance of 'the seven seas.' Yet, in the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was translated many a time, and in the twentieth century, Shakespeare-translation has been again revived.

In spite of all their faults, the nineteenth-century Shakespeare translators are unforgettable. Sometimes they are successful in their translations, above all they are the first to introduce Shakespeare into Bengali. Their original writings inspired by Shakespeare are also remarkable. The following view on translators in general is certainly applicable to these Shakespeare-translators :

Every translator must be looked on as an honest broker in this general trade, concerned with fostering interchange, for whatever one may say about the short-comings of translation, it remains one of the most important and significant endeavors in the world's work ....Indeed, every translator is a prophet to his people.<sup>2</sup>

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## HESPERIDES AND 'THE CEREMONIES OF INNOCENCE' : AN ESSAY ON ROBERT HERRICK

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SURABHI BANERJEE

### I

We were as twinn'd lambs that did  
frisk i'th' sun  
And bleat the one at th' other, what we  
chang'd/Was innocence for innocence

(*The Winter's Tale*, I.ii.67)

'Trivial' and 'pagan' are the generic epithets which criticism has attached to Robert Herrick's poetry. But to think of his poetry as pretty, trifling, deficient in seriousness, as the exhalation of an elegant mind, would be entirely misleading. The common estimation of him as a mere 'cavalier' is inadequate to explain the abounding vitality of his poetry.

The well-known Argument of his Book introducing *Hesperides*, where the poet writes :

I sing of Brooks, of Blossomes, Birds and Bowers :  
...of May-poles, Hock-Carts, Wassails, Wakes,  
...of Dews, of Raines...of Times trans-shifting.

—is not a mere catalogue of single and discrete delights, but a definition of Herrick's poetic métier as well. Basically, Herrick's is a jocund and exhilarating personality visualising and feasting upon the minutiae of the joy and delight of the natural world. Although his poetic mode is *not* strictly pastoral (compared to Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, the traditional pastoralists), and the genius of his world is *not* what the ancients called a kind of 'body sylva' with 'a multitude of timber trees growing promiscuously', the Herrickian world is essentially Arcadian consisting of "harmless bucolics." He celebrates the innocence of the natural world and I think he is the first English poet to note the picturesqueness and the miniatures of homely country life with microscopic eyes. All his

little landscapes are exquisitely delicate ; for instance, in the following lines from 'The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium' :

Here in green meadows sits eternal May,  
Purpling the margents, while perpetual day  
So doubly gilds the air, as that no night  
Can ever rust the enamel of the light...

He seizes with ease, thoroughness and absolute perfection, the minute details of pastoral life. When we turn from the sheer sensuousness of such stanzas as :

Like to a solemn sober stream  
Bankt all with lilies and the cream  
Of sweetest cowslips filling them...

or

A savour like unto  
a blessed field/When the  
bedabbled Morn washes the golden ears of corn"  
(Epithalamie),

to the vividly sketched interior :

Yet can thy humble roof maintain a choir,  
Of singing crickets by the fire,  
And the brisk mouse may feed himself with crumbs  
Till that the green-eyed kitling comes

(A Country Life)

—we are struck by the quickness of his observation, the charm and 'the bare sheer penetrating power' with which he invests the common objects of the natural world and removes the 'film of familiarity' therefrom. He observes the 'mites of candied dew in moony nights' and the frost-work glittering on the snow' and is keenly alive to all the sweet sounds and luscious scents of Nature and to the ever-shifting kaleidoscopic effects produced by light and shade.

The paean of natural objects is diversified with a ritualistic celebration of country revels for he sings also of village-customs and simple naive pleasures of rustic life. Along with the 'lily-wristed morn', 'the demasked meadows', 'the pebbly streams', he sings of 'balm', of oil of spice and ambergris, of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, 'the moon-parched grain of purest wheat'—all constituting the 'nut-brown mirth' of country rituals. His brilliant deployment of the motifs of whiteness, smoothness, softness on which he dwells with a luxuriant, lingering appreciation,

for instance, in the following lines from *To the Most Fair and Lovely Mistress Anne Soame* :

The smell of morning's milk and cream,  
Butter of cowslips mixed with them—

has a palpable, tangible quality which invests his poetry with a warm, vibrant sensuality. Poems like *A Country Life*, *The Hock-Cart* reveal that Herrick is a poet of fruition as well as burgeoning, dealing with the teeming fertility of the earth.

He celebrates the innocent unalloyed ecstasy of the 'brown lads', of morris-dances, quintets and quaint revellings on Twelfth Night and sings with avid zeal, of the ceremonious ritual with which the rustics propitiated the occult powers of Nature. This celebration of country festivity is chequered with a predominant carpe-diem motif. As a poet, he is deeply aware of the 'time's wingéd chariot' and the transience of Youth and Beauty. His *Corinna's going-a-Maying*, I think, is a perfect illustration, being at once the depiction of the joys of the May-day celebration and a statement of the carpe-diem theme. The suggestion that Corinna is like a plant, a part of Nature, is reinforced throughout the poem. The reference to raindrop in the stanza beginning with : "Our life is short and our days run/As fast away as does the sunne..." —is also surcharged with deep implications. In such lines as : 'We shall grow old apace...', there is a positive Keatsian ring, without the necessary 'poetic grace'. The total effect of the poem is one of gaiety tempered by the poignancy of the fugitiveness of Youth.

But there are poems with no overt reference to anything beyond the pure delight of the external world which evoke his close association with the classical masters—Virgil, Horace, Anacreon, Martial and Catullus. Here Herrick's poetic method may be described as one of 'distillation', for his subjects are mainly pastoral with a classical tinge and there are distinct echoes from Catullus, Martial, Ovid and Horace in his verse.

As he was a disciple of Jonson, Jonson beyond doubt introduced him to the classics, but I think, his mode of accepting the ideas he found there, was exclusively his own. First of all, I must contradict a statement by most editors of Herrick that Catullus was his model. Undoubtedly there are echoes from Catullus's *Carmina* in his most concise and sensuous lyrics like *To Anthea* and also in *Corinna* and in *To Live Merrily*, the poet tries to emulate Catullus's poetic vein. Like Catullus, too, he loves to dwell upon the mystic ritual of the wedding ceremony, but it should be



noted that the poet never mentions the one from whom he really took most of his form and colour. On the contrary, I believe that there is a striking affinity with the epigrams of Martial (just as Jonson used Martial very extensively and transformed him to English usages); the only difference to my mind, is that Herrick is much more religious-pagan of the two and he is as much a rural as Martial an urban poet. But in the incessant references to himself and his book, the fondness for gems and spices, the delight in the picturesqueness of private life, the sheer verbal compactness, the unique blend of sensitiveness and utter want of sensibility—Herrick's poetic genius is akin to Martial.

There is also a kinship between Herrick and Horace in respect of their philosophy of life, poetic tastes along with their surroundings, ideals and habits of life. His *To Country Life : Endymion Porter* is written in the Horatian vein. It illustrates a wit that looks forward to Marvell; the pithy, epigrammatic touch in such lines :

O happy life ! if that their good  
The Husbandmen but understood.—

reminds us of Martial, but notably enough, the style of observation changes in Herrick.

In *A Country Life*, too, we have the world of Horace (professing a golden mean of life with modicum of pleasures), translated by the poet in the seventeenth-century terms. The mixture of stoicism and epicureanism in the following lines, for example :

Keeping the barking stomach wisely quiet  
Less with a meat, then needful diet

—are pure Horace, the archetypal 'locus amoenus' is also characteristic of Horace's Sabine setting, *but* the minute details of the 'brisk mouse', 'singing crickets' and 'the green-eyed Kitling', are unmistakably Herrickian. Another striking point is that the swift-succession of holiday festivals finds no place in the Horatian verses on 'the country's sweet simplicity'.

Even his epithalamiums, although characteristic exercises in traditional genres, contain typical Herrickian touches. For instance, in 'Epithalamie : on *Sir Clipseby Crew and his Lady*', I think, the poet is at his best in his choral outbursts of greeting to the bride floating like a goddess, out of Elysium in a cloud of tiffany,

Treading upon vermilion  
And Amber ; spicing  
the chaste air with fumes of Paradise.

The pure sensuousness sometimes harks back to Donne, but the language in such lines :

Strip her of Spring time, tender-whimpering maids  
Now Autumn's come, when all those flowery  
Of her delays must end...

—is pure Herrick.

## II

Fill me a mighty bowl  
Up to the brink/That I may drink  
Unto my Jonson's soul.  
(A Bacchanalian Verse)

Jonson's precept and example led Herrick to the study and imitation of the Greek and Roman lyric that taught him structural form and precision of style and inspired him with his fastidious sense of artistic treatment. The classicism of Herrick was of Horace and Martial, but it was also that of Jonson who overthrew the Petrarchan traditions and replaced them by those of antiquity. The allegiance to Jonson might have kept him free from all the lyrical extravagances of his day. For it is interesting to note that his mistress-poems are free from the vices of conventional amatory verses.

Like Jonson, Herrick admires the aristocratic ideal symbolised by the great country-house, a centre of high civilization, a home of virtue, ceremonious order, learning and hospitality. Jonson's *Epigrams*, *Forest*, the *Underwoods*, consisting of the graceful love-song, the celebration of feasts and wit, the encomia of friends, epigrams, suggest favourite Herrickian themes. Herrick's vein in natural description is prefigured in the *Odes to Penshurst* and *Sir Robert Wroth*, of 1616. Again, Clerimont's Song in *The Silent Woman* :

Still to be neat still to be dressed,  
As you are going to a feast—

reminds us of Herrick's handling of Art versus Nature in *Delight in Disorder*.

Yet I feel that he lacks Jonson's intellectual force, massive integrity of mind, deep seriousness and fine moral perceptiveness. His sensuousness pitted against Jonsonian poetic mode in the following lines from *To Penshurst*, for instance :

The early cherry, with the later plum,  
 Fig, grape and quince, each in his time doth come ;  
 The blushing apricot and woolly peach  
 Hang on thy walls that every child may reach—

reveals that Herrick's passion wants concentration and assimilation for it is too ready to linger on externals.

And exclusively for this reason his celebration of 'the ceremonies of innocence' very often earns the epithet "pagan" and the question arises : Was he a 'pagan' who simply 'discovered' in the religion of his time a suitable subject for verse likely to be popular ? For it has often been alleged that even when he attempts a Biblical theme or turns to Christian devotion, the pagan cast of his mind wells up in spite of himself. As he writes :

Receive these crystal vials filled  
 With tears, distilled  
 From teeming eyes ; to these we bring  
 Each maid, her silver fillenting.....

*The Dirge of Jephtha's Daughter*, sung by the Virgins, becomes not so much a Hebrew lamentation as an elegy for a young Greek or Roman maiden on whom the flowers of Spring are strewn. It is also interesting to compare Donne's *Hymn to God my God, in my sickness* with Herrick's *His Letanie, to the Holy Spirit* ; whereas Donne contemplates the significance of Calvary, the redemption of Man, the Communion of Saints, Herrick can scarcely transcend the natural fear of death which our flesh is heir to. In the following lines, for example :

When his Potion and his Pill,  
 His or none, or little skill,  
 Mee for nothing, but to kill ;  
 Sweet spirit comfort me !

there is no deep spiritual perception, no profound vision of heaven, nor any sense of God's majesty and love.

Undoubtedly, Herrick took interest in the pagan literature of Rome and Greece and also in the native English survivals of the old fertility cults, but to my mind, however, he is a Christian of the 17th century, an inheritor of that great world system of thought and vision. To be more precise, the poet is both Christian and pagan almost in the same breath for he will present his supplication to God the father and invite the protection of his "peculiar Lar". For his delight in the abundance of life does not prevent him from facing steadily the stark fact of man's

mortality, his daily experience as a Christian priest reinforcing his intuitive acceptance of the Horatian truism that the years are bearing us inexorably to the grave. For instance, in *To Daffodils* or *To Blossoms* there is a constant reminder of mortality and mutability in such lines as :

We die as your hours do dry away,  
Like to the Summers raine,  
or as the Pearls of Morning's dew  
N'er to be found again.

It is true that profoundly philosophic content is lacking and the religious poems are not imbued with the passion of a Donne, the emotional depth and unction of a Herbert or the visionary insight of a Blake, yet the label 'pagan' is inadequate. For his poems not only constantly echo scripture, but what apparently seems heathenish or 'pagan', proves to be not so much Roman and classical as a universalized religious sentiment expressive of Anglicanism. His *Corinna's going-a-Maying*, again, I think, epitomizes this interpenetration of the two conflicting strands of Christianity and paganism in Herrick's poetry. The poem celebrates the pagan view but the poet refuses to suppress references to the Christian. We are nonplussed with the concluding stanza of the poem—what is its dominant note? Pagan, or Christian?—the mood, obviously is pagan, but through his reminder "We shall grow old apace..." the poet strikes a subtle, philosophical note.

Thus Herrick demands from us a multiple sensibility ; not only a capacity to respond to exquisite details of the 'frisking lillies', the 'chirring grasshopper' or 'the piping gnat', to 'delight in disorder' and 'wild civity' and to relish compound phrases like 'silken-slumber', 'great-eyed Kine', 'the lily-wristed morn', 'fresh quilted colours', 'dove-like eyes' and 'black-bearded vigil' (which often remind me of Hopkins and Keats), but also a capacity for brutal realism and for a sense of the *lacrimae-rerum* in the mundane world. One should not, therefore, be repulsed by the ostensible earthiness of his 'ceremonies of innocence'.

I believe that his greatness also lies in the fusion of lyricism with descriptive mode. He excels in miniatures, as I have indicated earlier, and captures the immediate sensuousness of feelings and experiences, but basically he is a lyric poet. The lyric note of these lines, limpid in their flow and liquid in their melody :

Lillies will languish, violets look ill,  
or So smells the air of spiced wine,  
or essences of jessamine

--appeal to our 'auditory imagination' and recall the felicity of the Restoration lyrists.

In his invariable responsiveness to the sensuous quality of experience he is kindred to, I think, Marvell, Keats and Shakespeare, but compared to Donne, he is lacking in the daring strokes of metaphysical wit, ingenious paradoxes and intellectual ambiguities. The fusion of pastoralism with classicism variegated with his unique lyricism and superb craftsmanship, rules out, to a certain extent, the strand of paganism and the deceptive simplicity of his poetry.

Jonson writes : "No son of mine can leap forth suddenly a poet by dreaming he hath been in Parnassus...there goes more to his making than so ; for Nature, Exercise, Imitation and study, *Art* must be adced to make all these perfect". I feel Herrick had all but the final quality—that is 'Art'. Hence, to claim that he is a 'great' poet would be arrogant ; but to dismiss him as a naïve, elegant trifler would be equally injudicious. This essay is not a resurrection of his reputation as a poet, but rather an attempt to indicate that Herrick's poetry is more complex, more richly perceptive and more finely balanced than his editors are generally prepared to grant. His range is extraordinarily ample and capacious, extending from the pastoral to the cynical, from the gross to an almost rococo elegance and from the prosaic to the dramatic. He may be lacking in the depth of a Blake, the mystic insight of a Wordsworth and the verbal grace and tour de force of a Marvell, but he is dowered with that quality of poetic "gusto" or "zest" accounting for the readability of his 'Woodnotes wild' which serve today as an anodyne for our "O'er-taxed heads, palsied hearts" and "the strong infection of our mental strife."

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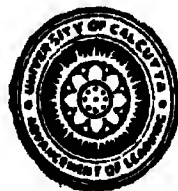
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BULLETIN  
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THE DEPARTMENT  
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ESSAYS PRESENTED TO DR AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

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UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA



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**ESSAYS PRESENTED TO DR AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY**

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Professor Amiya Chakravarty, who taught English Literature at the University of Calcutta from 1940 to 1948, is one of the outstanding intellectuals not only of Bengal but of India. His is an honoured name in Bengali literature and he is regarded as a pioneer in the field of modern Bengali poetry. Professor Chakravarty has had wide international contacts and he came to know personally many renowned world figures, among them, W. B. Yeats, Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer and Paul Robeson. He was closely attached to Rabindranath and Gandhiji. As Private Secretary to Rabindranath for many years, his association with the Poet was intimate. He was with Tagore in his many trips to U. K., Germany, U.S.S.R. and U. S. A. and also during his visit to Iran.

Professor Chakravarty was admitted to D. Phil. of Oxford University in 1937. In the same year he was awarded a Senior Research Fellowship by Oxford University to study the problems of cultural relationship among the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in North-West India. This project made him travel widely in that region. He went to the Indo-Afghan frontier and became interested in the broader problems of inter-cultural relationships between communities and nations. Professor Chakravarty joined Calcutta University in 1940. In 1948 he left India and taught Comparative Religion and Comparative Literature in many American universities—Howard, Kansas, Yale, Michigan and several other institutions. He was Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy at Boston from 1952 to 1966. In 1967 he joined the New York State University as Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy and he continues to hold this position. Dr Chakravarty is now Visiting Professor at Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.

The Board of Editors present this special number of the journal to this eminent man of letters in appreciation of his achievements as a poet, literary critic and humanist.

Srobona Munshi



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## THE "MODERN" POETS OF THE THIRTIES

---

A. G. STOCK

IN this century, most poets feel that to be contemporary is a kind of moral imperative. What exactly does it mean? In a literal sense you cannot help being contemporary with everyone born about the same time as yourself, and your experience, whether like or unlike theirs, is part of the experience of the age. But also, since human biology changes more slowly than social conditions, the most fundamental things—birth, for instance, hunger, love, the pain of loss, and unless you are exceptionally unlucky, moments of sheer joy in being alive on the earth in good health—have happened to people in every generation. In some ways the circumstances differ between generations as between individuals; but is it specially important to emphasise what is peculiar to your own time, rather than what links it to the past and will presumably make it intelligible to the future? The question needs to be asked but is not easy to answer, for it involves larger questions of the relation between art and society.

To a student of twentieth-century poetry, however, what matters is that this conscious wish to "express the age" is real, serious, and quite different from just following the fashion. It is almost as if the poets see themselves as the antennae of society, sensing in the atmosphere what was nameless till they found words for it. I remember a student in England, a girl who was sensitive but not sophisticated or widely read, saying to me, "Do you know, I'm rather frightened of modern poetry. It's as if the poets were telling you something you didn't know you were thinking." This was in 1939, when "modern poetry" meant the work of poets who found their voices early in that decade—W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender conspicuous among them—and with them, to express the age was a conscious purpose.

Of course, what they expressed was their own vision of the age, not the historian's would-be objective analysis in the light of hindsight. Forty years later it is difficult to throw off all that knowledge and look at the world as we saw it then. It is one of the troubles about being



contemporary that times change rapidly, the stresses and strains of one period obliterate the quite different ones of the last, what we expected is forgotten in the shock of what actually happened. Yet the expected, which was what our imaginations were preparing for, was the greater reality before the actual event blew it into dreamland.

I say "we" because I belong to that generation, and though I did not meet the poets I have named, grew up in the same world as far as social and political events mould one's world. When I encountered their work I read it with excitement, if seldom with immediate understanding. I will try to recreate the background of that excitement by forgetting what a historian would say of the 1930's and remembering what they felt like at the time.

The England of the beginning of the century, in which we grew up, was highly stratified both socially and culturally. Education might be compulsory but was anything but democratic. Children of upper-class families went to expensive schools where they met other children, and teachers, with their own kind of background. Working class children went to free primary schools which they usually left to become wage-earners before they were fourteen. On the whole, with individual exceptions, the classes lived apart hardly knowing how to talk to one another. Among the educated the growing need for specialisation tended to produce still smaller groups with separate interests. Men of letters whose concern was with the heritage of the past had not much in common either with technicians or business magnates who were changing the face of the present. This had not always been so. Tennyson in his lifetime was something like a best-seller, but since then poetry both ancient and modern had somehow got itself enclosed in a parkland.

World War I was a brief interlude. First, England was swept by a common patriotic emotion and young men of all classes volunteered for death. Poetry in the classic tradition, like Laurence Binyon's dignified elegy *For the Fallen* :—

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea

—was for everyone. Of course, at that time we didn't know what war was like. If Rupert Brooke had actually seen a battlefield strewn with corpses, could he have written that consoling sonnet comparing it to a lake of dancing waters frozen into stillness? Before long disillusioned soldiers knew the physically and spiritually brutalising experience of

the trenches, and became aware also of profiteering at home, and of staff officers sitting smugly comfortable, well out of danger. In Siegfried Sassoon's

If I were fierce and bald and scant of breath  
I'd live with scarlet majors at the base  
And speed glum heroes up the road to death

the truculent monosyllables deflate the poetry of Binyon's

At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

But this too was a shared feeling. Sassoon was in the trenches, expressing what the other glum heroes would have said if they were articulate enough.

After the war life fell back into its old stratifications, but without the old feeling of permanence. As yet nobody knew what the Russian Revolution meant: you interpreted it according to your preconceptions. To most of the upper classes it threatened everything they valued in traditional civilisation (including of course their own good life, but including, to be fair to them, a great deal else). But when Churchill tried to intervene on behalf of the old régime the soldiers threatened mutiny, industrial workers backed them, walls suddenly carried large posters shouting HANDS OFF RUSSIA! and WOULD YOU FIGHT FOR WARSAW? It was a revelation of the gap between classes. The next few years brought a series of great industrial strikes; working up to the General Strike of 1926. Though they were not victories, each left the workers with more experience, more confidence in their power through united action to disrupt the established order.

Those were the years of which Eliot painted a devastating picture in *The Waste Land*. It is mainly a picture of the well-to-do. He did not know the workers and certainly hoped for nothing good from revolution; but he showed other poets how to describe crises of the spirit in language of the present-day world. The first reaction was angry howls of "That's not poetry!"

My recollection is that after about 1921 everyone knew that something was wrong with the economy, even if we did not know exactly what. There had been much brave talk of making England "a home fit for heroes" when the soldiers returned. Now, discharged soldiers, selling matches or playing musical instruments in the streets, retorted that only heroes could stay alive in it. The upper classes still thought they had a right to authority. I was at Oxford when the first minority Labour

Government took office, and I remember the anger, disguised as mockery, at the idea of ex-miners and railwaymen holding Cabinet office and attending garden parties at Buckingham Palace. Worse still, there was a Communist Party of Great Britain, founded in 1919. It hadn't many members, but there were dark whispers that "Russian money" must be behind all these big strikes.

The Great Depression did not begin till 1929, but it came suddenly, and spread so wide and lasted so long that it exhausted all the provisions made against unemployment. There were people destitute, and everyone tried to shove the responsibility for keeping them alive on to someone else. Unemployment meant tramping the streets in all weathers, asking at factory after factory for work you knew very well was not to be had, so that the works manager could put a stamp on your card showing that you had applied. If you queued up on Friday at the Labour Exchange without enough such stamps, the card would be stamped with the baleful letters N. G. S. W. (Not Genuinely Seeking Work) and you would be sent away with no money for the week. "They" were afraid that unemployment might teach a wage-earner to enjoy leisure. Great hunger marches converged on London to the terror of respectable citizens who expected them to loot the shops. They did not, although there was plenty of food in the shops; but sometimes when they assembled for meetings in Hyde Park the mounted police attacked them with truncheons. Meantime in Canada wheat was being burnt as fuel for railway engines because it was "uneconomic" to send it where men and women had no food and no money to buy it, and on the English sea coasts fishermen threw their catches back into the sea because nobody could afford to buy at a price to cover the cost of transport to market. It looked as if capitalism were breaking down, as Karl Marx said it would.

Why had those poets who had told the truth about war nothing to say about Depression? Chiefly because they were dead. Siegfried Sassoon was one who survived, to go back to the foxhunting landlord's life he was brought up to, but though he still wrote poetry it was no longer the same kind. It could not be, because he was not living the same kind of life.

The new generation of the well-to-do, born too late to die in World War I, followed their fathers to public schools and then, if their bent lay that way, to Oxford or Cambridge, but the world they grew up into was not their fathers' world. It was no longer possible to believe that increasing prosperity was in the natural order and that liberal principles

in government and education would gradually smooth away the worst injustices. If revolution was not imminent, we thought, it ought to be. Some of us hoped it might happen without bloodshed, but what with meanness at the top and militancy at the bottom it didn't look as if parliamentary methods would carry it through. Violence or not (and except for Moseley and his British Union of Fascists, I don't think anyone on either side was seriously organising for violence), social justice and moral conviction put us on the workers' side in the class war. People whose income came from landownership or invested capital or who drew high salaries from professions to which only an expensive education gave them entry : these, not the unemployed worker drawing his dole, were the true parasites on society. To many the U.S.S.R. seemed the hope of a new civilisation founded on social justice. Some joined the Communist Party, others, more cautious, tried to maintain revolutionary principles without committing themselves to Soviet tactics.

This was how the young progressives of the thirties were thinking. I have no doubt the young reactionaries found equally clear moral and intellectual convictions ; they could invoke religion and the traditions of western civilisation as well as the economic need for capitalism ; but not being one of them I seldom listened to their arguments. In politics and religion, unfortunately, most of us habitually judge our own side by what we know they mean and our opponents by what we see them do.

The young poets were progressives. But moral convictions do not make the whole of a man. However much they believed in the workers' rightness, Auden, Spender, Day Lewis did not belong to the working class. Family affections, friendships, the education which had given them the best of western culture, everything in their upbringing put them on the other side. To cross the line meant rejecting their own history and remaking themselves, and because they were poets before all else, it meant remaking poetry, bringing it out of its enclosed parkland into the world of their actual predicament.

This seems to me to be what the "modern" poetry of the thirties was driving at. Very little of it was directly revolutionary ; a great deal was about an inward revolution : the discovery of a new, invigorating sense of values to fit them for the action to come.

I hope it is clear that my account of the thirties scene neither is nor pretends to be a social historian's objective assessment ; it is how it looked to a certain kind of people, who could not foresee events and whose perspective was odd because they were in the middle of what

they looked at. To the historian it would be quite unimportant that they were getting ready for a revolution, since what they got in fact was another world war. To the poets, at least in the early part of the decade, the coming revolution was the imaginative reality. Since it was the workers' revolution, not theirs, it was not their business to prescribe its aims and tactics, and since it had not happened yet they could not write about it realistically: they could teach themselves how to be fit to serve in it.

In those days Auden was the leading spirit. Day Lewis and Spender testify in their autobiographies to his impact on them when they were all students at Oxford, and the impact is felt in their work, although each had his distinctive voice. For instance, there is a kind of landscape that recurs in Auden's early poems as if his mind is at home there: a bleak infertile country of hills and heather and small streams running fast over stones, where the weather is usually bad; there is not much habitation, but here and there a worked-out mine or a junction where trains no longer run; a country for campaigning rather than settling in. There seems to be a war of some kind going on, but the cause is vague: what matters is the toughness it demands, the power to endure solitude and act alone, not for personal gain or glory, but as part of a comradeship. It is as if the Norse sagas which had fed Auden's imagination in childhood had merged with the war-games in a school military training camp. But Day Lewis and Spender have both been there, and each uses it in his own way. Auden's "tall, unwounded leader/Of doomed companions" looks out "from scars where kestrels hover;" he is resolute and full of experience but not hopeful. Day Lewis, in an exhilarating lyric beginning

Now to be with you, elate, unshared,  
O kestrel joy, my hoverer in heaven!

is full of the adventurous ecstasy of breaking away into the utterly unknown; and in Stephen Spender's well-known lyric, "O young men O young comrades", when he calls them to leave home and "advance to rebuild and sleep with friend on hill" he might be an enthusiastic young recruit to those doomed companions; what he is calling for is a transformation of values ("Count your eyes as jewels and your valued sex") to set them free from the clutch of property.

In one of Auden's most carefully constructed poems, "O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless heaven," he puts the coming revolution into a rather frightening image:

Some possible dream, long coiled in the ammonite's slumber  
Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and kindness  
Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain.

The ammonite, oldest of fossils, the only spiral in nature that goes anti-clockwise, reverses our accepted values. In a later revision, "kindness" was toned down to "reflection," which perhaps makes the ammonite less brutal ; but "talk and kindness" exactly pictures what the young intellectuals denounced—a civilisation softened by generations of affluence till it could hardly imagine, much less take action against an absolute evil. It is true that the surgeon's idea of pain is not pain inflicted on one person for the good of another—but that line made such a splendid picture of the revolutionary as he would like to see himself that the flaw went unnoticed. In the thirties it was one of his most admired, most frequently anthologised poems ; and when I looked for it in his final collected edition I was amazed to find that he had left it out. Was it because that dream of revolution had been made irrelevant by history, or because his older self looked back with dislike on a streak of callousness in the young man who wrote it ?

There was indeed plenty to dislike in that bumptious young man. He was didactic all the time ; much too sure that everyone else was wrong and much too ready to put them right ; neither compassion nor admiration was conspicuous in his poems ; often he seemed to enjoy punishing his characters for being in the wrong, like the school bully promoted to prefect. But poetry is something more than the expression of a likeable personality. I think he attracted us because he said, uncompromisingly and with full assurance, "what we didn't know we were thinking". He drew on a wide range of ideas, images from history and pre-history, psychology, the natural sciences, spectacles of contemporary life, making them all converge on an imminent crisis, a "possible dream" which was also a call to be ready for some testing ordeal ; and in a wide range of styles from the brutally colloquial to the near-pontifical. The total effect was both alarming and exhilarating. Working-class readers on the other hand, whether politically blood-red or pale pink, seldom responded to this kind of poetry : it had nothing to do with their problems, which were more straightforward but grimmer. I have some evidence for saying this, for in the thirties I was teaching literature to adult classes where some students had secondary and others only primary education. Many of the latter were lovers of literature, who read for their own pleasure Shakespeare, the Romantic poets, Bernard Shaw, but they saw little in these

moderns, whereas the others, whether they liked them or not, understood enough to want to decipher the message.

To return to the background. The political events of that decade were not themes for the poets, but they were sources of mental confusion, for they entangled working-class revolt more and more with international politics. The U. S. S. R. was the Revolution embodied and all socialists were concerned to defend it. On Marxist principles loyalty was due to the workers of the world, not to one's own capitalist government : only the U. S. S. R. where the workers were the government had a right to be nationalist. At first, when it seemed that Britain would go to war with Russia, Socialists, pacifists and many liberals united in anti-war demonstrations and protests against rearmament ; workers threatened to turn the capitalist war into a revolution, and the public was startled to see how far leftism had taken hold of the students when the Oxford Union carried a debating motion "That this House refuses to fight for King and Country". Then counter-revolution in Europe took the shape of Hitler ; gradually, very gradually, we began to realise the ruthlessness of Nazism, a much greater danger to the U. S. S. R. and to socialism everywhere. We thought the two powers would fight one another, and suddenly the anti-war committees were saying that it would not be a capitalist war if Britain was allied with the U. S. S. R. The cry was now "Stop Hitler !" Ex-servicemen who had survived World War I and vowed never to join in another began to think that this was different ; that Nazism was dragging down all human standards.

And still the Depression dragged on ; in England there were more than two million unemployed. A few people, but among the intellectuals not very many, stuck to it that the place to fight capitalism was in your own country and that our first business was with British imperialism. It only added to confusion, because if U. S. S. R. wanted Britain for an ally, it should be a strong ally, not weakened by divisions.

There was another shift in the pattern when the Spanish civil war broke out in 1936. Spain was by no means revolutionary, but it had a constitutionally elected government, more or less liberal-democratic, with broad support from the people, and Franco raised an armed force to overthrow it. Officially the European governments made a non-intervention pact : unofficially, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany backed Franco and supplied him with arms, and socialists and democrats, in defiance of their government, with little to offer in the way of arms, raised an International Brigade on the people's side. In spite of quarrels on the popular side it

quickly became a kind of rehearsal for the longed-for war against Fascism. The poets at last had a theme again—this time a clear, extrovert theme intelligible to all. And yet they were still, incorrigibly, poets of the inner conflict.

Franco won. By then (1938) it was pretty clear that war with Germany was going to come. And then, to the further confusion of the leftists, the U. S. S. R. concluded its trade pact with Germany. So after all when war was declared in September, 1939, it was another war of nations against nations, not a defence by the workers of the Workers' Republic. But Hitler had now become an enemy in his own right, and as such, a unifying force for the British people. With all that history behind them of inner and outer conflict and dissatisfaction they went into it, not in the high enthusiastic ignorance of 1914 but as an unavoidable necessity. Cecil Day Lewis summed up the feeling :

It is the Logic of our times,  
No subject for immortal verse,  
That we who live by honest dreams  
Defend the bad against the worse.



# THE THEME OF INSURGENCE IN O'CASEY'S PLAYS

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LILA MAITRA

## 1

On Easter Monday, 1916, Dublin was awakened to a fierce political insurgence against the ruling British Government. The rising was checked with iron hands at the cost of many lives. The militants were kept in police custody and Sean O'Casey was one of them.

The rebellion served its purpose in reviving the Old Sinn Fein Movement in the country. For many years after this rising Guerilla warfare by the Irish and reprisals by the British forces went on. Both open and secret activities by the Sinn Feins made the country restless and political controversies raged on unabated. In 1922, the Irish Free State was established and the country was partially pacified.

The literary career of O'Casey began at this critical period of national life. The attitude of the rulers made him disillusioned. He withdrew from active politics and devoted himself to watching and analysing life and reproducing it honestly in his dramas.

His first play, produced at the Abbey Theatre, was *The Shadow of a Gunman*.

When De Valera was at the height of his glory in 1922, the Communist movement was in an incipient stage. Catholicism prevented the Irish from turning Communist, but working class unrest gave a new orientation to the nationalist movement. O'Casey was its only voice in literature. In some of his plays the slum life is portrayed against the background of national insurgence ; his unflinching realism presents the point of view of the underdog in society, wriggling in the clutches of conflicting political forces.

O'Casey was born in a working class family. At that time the working class was not yet class conscious. In spite of the efforts of leaders like Jim Larkin to rouse that consciousness the spirit of nationalism proved overwhelming. The problems of the oppressed nation over-

shadowed the grim actualities of a class ridden society. O'Casey saw the areas of darkness, but he had enough breadth and steadiness of vision to present the problems that beset the whole society. He could see both sides of each problem with remarkable perspicacity, although he had doubts about the means of solution adopted by the national leaders ; he did not hesitate to sever connection with them when his ideals clashed with theirs. Perhaps this explains the paradox of militancy and objectivity in his early plays, especially in his treatment of the theme of insurgence.

We find a projection of O'Casey's militant thought and keen perception in the plays *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *Red Roses for me* and *The Star Turns Red*. He dramatises the impact of insurgence on different sets of people in society. The attention of the public was first focussed on O'Casey with the production of *The Shadow of a Gunman* in Abbey Theatre in 1925. It is a tragedy in two acts in which we are introduced to a Dublin tenement house in Hilljoy Square in the insurgent Ireland. Davoren, the poet and Seumas, the pedlar, occupy the same room. They talk about politics and poetry whenever they meet : the poet laments the pains of life after Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and the pedlar proclaims his current political views after tired loitering in the streets. Other occupants in the house take them to be the members of the Irish Citizen Army and treat them with reverence. Minnie, an independent girl, is romantically inclined towards Davoren taking him to be a gunman on the run and is secretly in love with him. Davoren with his human weakness lives on his false identity. One night, a raid of the Black and Tans takes place. The Black and Tans persecute all suspected persons who happen to fall in their way. Davoren's friend Maguire who left a bag in the corner of his room in the morning is shot dead in the afternoon at Knocksedan.

When the apprehended raid takes place everything is turned upside down. Minnie tries to escape with the bag full of bombs with the hope of being spared as a woman, but is shot dead. She dies with the slogan on her lips : 'Up the Republic'. Dónal Davoren and Seumas Shields save their skin at the cost of Minnie's life. She sacrifices her life for the cherished ideal of patriotism and for the sake of the sham hero who poses as a gunman. O'Casey calls *The Shadow of a Gunman* a tragedy ; the whole tragedy hangs on the slender theme of mistaken identity. It is Davoren's tragedy rather than Minnie's although she is heroic and he is a coward. A parallel is to be found in *King Lear* which is about Lear and not about Cordelia. There is more tragedy in killing the wrong person than in

being killed, as Aristotle was aware. Davoren the poet who loves to live on the dole and who has got normal human susceptibilities, finds it more advantageous to win the affections of a romantic girl in the mask of a revolutionary Republican. His soliloquy "Minnie is attracted to the idea and I am attracted to Minnie. And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a Gunman?"<sup>1</sup> exposes his character. Perhaps nobody but O'Casey with his intimate experience of the people with mock patriotism in the troublesome days of political disturbances could have written thus. Minnie's death brings about Davoren's self-realization. He cries out at the end of the play :

It's a terrible thing to think that little Minnie is dead, but it's still more terrible to think that Davoren and Shields are alive ! Oh Donal Davoren, Shame is your portion now till the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl be broken. Oh, Davoren, Donal Davoren, poet and poltroon, poltroon and poet !<sup>2</sup>

When the elements of conflict in the drama, true patriotism and false patriotism, are put to test, true patriotism wins the day. Besides these main characters of the drama we get glimpses of the tenement of the life in Dublin in broad daylight. The small joys and sorrows of the inhabitants, their superstition and meanness are depicted with wonderful perception through the conversations of the simple folk . The comic effect of the drama is heightened by it. O'Casey like his Elizabethan predecessors introduces comic situations to produce a tragic effect.

## II

Revolution is the theme of O'Casey's *The Star Turns Red*. National insurgence formed the background of *The Shadow of a Gunman* and *The Plough and the Stars*. *Red Roses for Me* presents the conflict between the employer and the employees over the question of wages. But *The Star Turns Red* is based upon a political idea or political emotion directed against the prevailing mode of administration. The dramatist is disillusioned by the decadent Church and the aggressive Government which let down the masses. Oppressed humanity counts the beads of misery and waits to be annihilated. O'Casey finds the guiding Star of Christmas Eve turned 'Red' and in his vision the Saviour is reincarnated in the Communist ideal.

The play is so constructed that the highlights are focussed on the idea of revolution moving from triumph to greater triumph until the workers achieve complete victory. The play opens with a quarrel in a family. The peace and piety of the Christmas Eve is torn asunder by two antagonist sons belonging to opposite political camps. The mother fails to pacify the Fascist Kian and the Communist Jack. She bewails the disruption. Further complication arises when Michael, the father of Julia—Julia is Jack's fiancée—is killed by the Fascists while attending a workers' meeting. The second act shows the officials in the Workers' Union Office. They are bribed by the opposite camp. Here we get a glimpse of the towering figure of Red Jim, a true leader of the masses. With his wonderful personality he brings his fellow workers back to a sense of duty. The incident reveals the moral strength of the revolution. In the third act, the Church and the Revolution confront each other with their respective claims over the deadbody of Michael. The Reds win the day and carry away the dead body of Michael with a hymn to the ascending 'Red Star'. The fourth Act culminates in an actual battle between the hostile parties. The Lord Mayor's residence preparing for the Christmas festivities is captured by Red Jim and is converted into a garrison. A bitter fight follows. Red Jim wins the fight at the cost of the lives of many sincere followers including Jack. The purple priest of the Fascists enters followed by Kian bearing the flag of truce. The Reds win and the soldiers join the workers. Julia cries silently over her dead comrade Jack and Red Jim consoles her. Julia's tears give superb expression to the sacrifice and suffering which win a cause. In *The Star Turns Red* O'Casey's genius gives a new significance to an old legend. The journey of the Magi to reach the new born Saviour following the Star is stale history today. Today or tomorrow that guiding star will turn Red beckoning the wise to seek out the newborn Revolution which will save oppressed humanity from the conflicting dogmas of politics.

According to O'Casey, this is the gospel of today. Born and brought up in an atmosphere of political unrest and impressed by the revolutionary activities on the continent in the late thirties, O'Casey finds the theme of the drama after his own heart. He relates the intimate experiences of the workers and visualizes a day, not in far Utopia, but in this world, in our own lifetime, may be tomorrow or the day after, when equality and fraternity will triumph over tyranny. Since the great tramway strike in Dublin in 1913, workers of Western Europe had had little success in insurgent movements except in the "Hands off Russia" movement in 1919. So the dramatist dedicates the play to those workers who fought against authority

in 1913 during the railway strike and won the battle. They should understand the revolutionary vision of the dramatist as once they had a glimpse of that vision themselves. The Saffron Shirts, members of an imaginary Fascist movement, are presented by O'Casey on the stage as a spectacular contrast to Communism. The triple alliance of the Church, the State and Fascism is resisted by the masses emboldened by the spirit of Communism. The workers live if the revolution lives and they die with it. The vision of the dramatist is the vision of a brave new world based on equity and fraternity.

'Superior' critics put aside this drama as propaganda, and while their judgment is not completely erratic it betrays a certain insensitiveness. In propaganda real life is lost in abstract ideals ; humour and emotion, pity and pathos are lacking. The technique is one of distortion. Tested by these criteria *The Star Turns Red* comes out unimpaired. The play is presented in a way as if the workers' revolution has become the creed of the author and the audience alike ; they are ready to die for it. Emotion is not killed by politics ; on the contrary, politics is transformed into emotion. Revolutionary activities are performed with an almost religious zeal. Hence the drama ceases to be a party propaganda and assumes the character of spiritual realization.

The exposition of the drama is striking. With swift touches, the cross forces of modern life are vividly rendered. The poetry and peace of a Christmas Eve, the bitter quarrel of the brothers, the agony of a mother who cannot pacify her sons, yet is loved by both, the cravings of Julia for a new life, the death of Julia's father Michael all point to the approaching crisis. The characters are used symbolically to depict the triumph of Communism over Fascism. Kian and Jack represent two different political camps. Julia is a true comrade though she occasionally refuses to be a part of the political machine. Michael is a dedicated Communist dying with the ardour of a martyr. Red Jim is a true leader who knows how to tend his flock. He can die in order to live, and live like a human being. His gospel is the gospel of life and not of death or renunciation. When Julia silently weeps over the dead body of Jack, he consoles :

.....You'll nurse, now, a far greater thing than a darling dead man. Up, young woman, and join in the glowing hour your lover died to fashion. He fought for life, for life is all ; and death is nothing.<sup>3</sup>

The workers win the right of living at the cost of life. Pity and pathos mingle with hope to create a rainbow of artistic beauty.

However, the world that Sean O'Casey depicts is enclosed within too narrow limits to be a convincing image of the greater world where peace and justice have yet to be embodied in reality. *The Star Turns Red* is a significant addition to the dramatic genre, but it is doubtful whether it can be considered a great work. The subjective interpretation of a dogma has deprived the play of true objectivity required for greatness in drama or creative art in general. When politics is converted into emotion, it gets the better of judgment. Reality is sacrificed for an abstract idea, and party politics takes the place of art. One major weakness of the play rests in the sacrifice of moral and emotional balance in the dramatic conflict : the balance is tilted. All human virtues are on one side, all the inhumanities on the other. The situation is oversimplified in favour of the workers, for it is made to appear that their solidarity and human virtues are enough in themselves to break the bonds of the world. Perhaps this lack of objective detachment demanded of a great artist has led the critics to regard the drama as propaganda. There is much substance in that charge, but one can hardly miss O'Casey's wonderful capacity of visualising and portraying intense emotional conflicts raging round an abstract dogma.

## REFERENCES

1. *Collected Plays*, vol. I, 'The Shadow of a Gunman', p. 124.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.
3. *Collected Plays*, vol. II, 'The Star Turns Red', p. 353, lines 23-27.

## LOOK BACK IN ANGER IN PERSPECTIVE

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S. KRISHNAMOORTHY AITHAL

JOHN OSBORNE'S *Look Back in Anger* offers a major challenge to the genteel tradition of the English drama. There is no attempt in the play to refine life, render characters and action in a pleasant and agreeable manner, invent a polite form of speech for the characters as in the popular plays of Somerset Maugham or Noel Coward. The author replaces the people and the sentiments of the upper and upper-middle classes that the drama of the time had resumed to show, after the experiments of realism, with those of the lower rungs of society. In the plays of the past decades, those characters spoke and behaved charmingly and when some serious emotional crisis arose, as Henry Popkin says, "their special concern was always to show their good taste and breeding by refusing to express their emotions."<sup>1</sup> Such an exercise of control might have been possible to the privileged few of those days who went to Oxford or Cambridge, but certainly not to the large number of people who have to receive their education in free schools and redbrick universities today. The problem becomes further complicated when this education does not ensure better opportunities. The result is frustration, and anger at everything, particularly at those who think that life goes on peacefully as before. Osborne is the first to give free and full expression to the feelings of this generation in this play. He proclaims, "The stiff upper lip is a physical deformity."<sup>2</sup> Louis Kronenberger writes that the play "had not only jabbed some good spiny cactus into England's aspidistra drama, it also changed a new generation's call to disorder in English life."<sup>3</sup>

The play was produced on May 8, 1956 in the Royal Court Theatre. It had an immediate effect. It came as an explosion and reverberated in the decorous anterooms of English culture. Kenneth Tynan observes that "It was as if, in the tiptoe hush of a polite assembly, someone had deafeningly burped."<sup>4</sup> The play was not only revolting to the sense of good taste, it sounded a great alarm among the people. Tynan reports that Osborne was, to the London critics, "a new and unheard of disease."<sup>5</sup> Jimmy Porter's bitter jeering, his vulgarity, his mixture of high education

and low breeding was to many in Britain, in the words of J. D. Scott, "Like something out of a flying saucer, a Thing from Outer Space, something new and terrible, strange and frightening."<sup>6</sup> Their fear was that Jimmy Porter and his tribe might conquer their world. The theatre's press agent, when asked for a description of the iconoclastic author of the play, said that he was first and foremost "an angry young man."<sup>7</sup> Before long the phrase snowballed into a cult. It did so because it defined a phenomenon that was nationally recognizable.

For several years past, a group of writers and critics had been expressing in many different ways and voices irritation at the scene around them. They found a symbol of their dissatisfaction now. Robert Coughlan writes: "For, just as a tuning fork struck with the right force can set all the windows in a room vibrating, these ideas match a state of mind rather common among literary Englishmen in the age group of roughly twenty five to thirty five years."<sup>8</sup>

The plot of the play is very simple. Nothing much happens. The main interest of the drama lies in its conversation, more correctly in Jimmy's speeches. As Thomas Barbour describes it, it is "a talky play."<sup>9</sup> "The play never really advances," remarks Kronenberger, "from a kind of one-man show to an integrated social drama."<sup>10</sup> Jimmy Porter is a young intellectual with working class connections. He has been an advertising salesman, a journalist, and even a vacuum-cleaner salesman, unsuccessful in everything. Now, with his friend, Cliff, he runs a sweet-stall, an odd job for a man from a university. He has married Alison, a colonel's daughter. Unable to use his education to any better purpose and embittered by life, he is brutal in his criticisms of society. Alison represents the world which shows no intellectual curiosity or enthusiasm for his development and she becomes his immediate object of attack. She cannot bring herself to feel the way he does about things. She is pregnant, but does not dare to tell Jimmy for fear he may think it a betrayal. Alison's friend, Helena, urges her to leave Jimmy, and finally she goes to her parents for the sake of the child. Helena, for all her hatred of Jimmy, feels a kind of attraction towards him. During one of their verbal fights, she slaps him savagely on the face only to take away that pain by opening her arms to him and becoming his mistress. Several months later, Alison, with her child dead, turns up to show her sick and suffering soul to Jimmy. Helena realizes that she must leave Jimmy to make place for Alison. As Alison grovels in suffering, Jimmy takes her in his arms and they withdraw into their bear's cave and squirrel's drey.



It is Jimmy Porter's anger that holds our attention throughout the play. We are constantly kept conscious of his acrimonious manner. We see him jeering at one thing after another endlessly, showing us his limitless power of fury. He lets loose his scorn "like a revolving gun turret on everything within range—art, religion, radio, Sunday, England, mother-in-law, wife."<sup>11</sup> The steadiest quarrel of Jimmy is with the British upper-middle class represented by Alison and her former world. He makes a fiendish attack on Alison's mother: "I said she's an old bitch, and should be dead! ...I say she ought to be dead. My God, those worms will need a good dose of salts the day they get through her! Oh what a belly-ache you've got coming to you, my little wormy ones! Alison's mother's on the way!"<sup>12</sup> He snubs Alison and her brother as "They are as they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous." He rails at her as a "monument to non-attachment" and derides her as "Lady Pusillanimous." (p. 21).

We may exercise all our detachment, but we cannot shut Jimmy out of our minds even for a moment—he descends on us with a nerve-shaking violence as though he has come expecting what we might do and has already decided how he would answer it. He appears to think that such an effort on our part is an assault on his character, an effort to deny his very existence, and he will not spare us for this affront. He will be reduced to nothing if his anger is denied him. So he jeers again, reviles people to show that he is alive. He seems to have overestimated our sense of detachment which makes him all the more unbearable. We are not only to acknowledge him as an angry young man, but also to partake in the suffering he inflicts on his 'victims'. We feel that Jimmy Porter is not just a stray case of mental aberration; his protests are motivated by something more than purely personal frustration, they have more than a limited dramatic context.

We may briefly study the causes of Jimmy's anger. We are given various facts about his life in the play and are left to infer the reasons for his present state. As a boy he had to watch the slow death of his father. For all his education, he has to earn his living by being a stall-keeper. He is loathed by Alison's parents, especially her mother to whom he is "a dirty word" (p.36). "There is no limit," he knows, "to what the middle-aged mummy will do in the holy crusade against ruffians like me" (p.52). He meets the middle class smugness, complacency and detachment everywhere. He sees people "looking forward to the past and their souls cut right off from the ugly problems of the twentieth century altogether"

(p.56). Alison's father admits Jimmy's charge against him. "Perhaps Jimmy's right," he says, "Perhaps I am...an old plant left over from the Edwardian Wilderness" (p.67). Jimmy does not find any opportunity to prove his worth. "I suppose people of our generation," he complains, "aren't able to die for good causes any longer..... There aren't any good, brave causes left ..... If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus" (pp.84-85). Helena tells Alison that Jimmy was "born out of his time" (p. 90). These matters are given not in cause-and-effect relation, but at random and we have to assume that they are responsible for his anger in some way.

The question of the dramatic justification of Jimmy's anger has been widely discussed by the critics of *Look Back in Anger*. It has been observed by many critics that Osborne fails to create a convincing dramatic situation to justify Jimmy's outbursts. "No matter how influential Osborne's role has been," Roy Huss remarks, "in striking out a path of social protest for other dramatists and novelists to follow, in this, his first play, he fails to give a dramatic context to such themes."<sup>13</sup> In the opinion of Carl Bode, "the anger he, Jimmy, exhibits goes far beyond its origin, and the explanation is not enough."<sup>14</sup> T. C. Worsley writes that the author "fails to base his hero's predicament on any dramatised motives. Motives are written into the text, true ; but they are not working in it, fomenting it, aerating it."<sup>15</sup> Answering questions like Is Jimmy's anger justified? Why does he not do something? Kenneth Tynan asserts, "In the presence of vitality like this, such questions are pedantic."<sup>16</sup> It seems to me that these are natural questions and cannot be simply dismissed as pedantic. It must be also added that although we do not find convincing external causes, we do see a strange truthfulness in Jimmy's voice and it does not strike us as hollow, unmotivated speech. While granting that the play fails to validate Jimmy's anger by proper explanation, we have to note that it sounds nevertheless true. The problem of motivation is not as simple as finding something to match something else in this play.

What highly upsets the critics about the play is Osborne's stand in respect of Jimmy Porter. He is said to endorse the hero's attitude instead of being critical towards them. "The only thing that worries me," writes John Raymond, "about Jimmy is the way in which Mr. Osborne means us to take him. Does he expect us to like or even admire his hero? I have a feeling that he does and the suspicion is deeply disturbing."<sup>17</sup> "But I

have a horrible suspicion," says Thomas Barbour, "that the author may think of his hero, for all his unattractive qualities, as an especially noble spirit, whose pathetic situation is the result of living in an ignoble world,"<sup>18</sup> "But Mr. Osborne is leery of admitting any testimony," Barbara Deming comments in her detailed study of the play, "that Jimmy Porter's actions are not healthy and wise. And for this reason many in an audience who would otherwise find him sympathetic enough, look at him askance. Instead of affording us the chronicle of an irrational passion, the play takes virtually the form of a case stubbornly argued for its hero...One after another, all the other characters are brought to testify in Jimmy's behalf."<sup>19</sup>

It is obvious that Osborne takes the side of Jimmy Porter in the play. In spite of all the suffering Jimmy inflicts on Alison, she feels, curiously enough, "a deep loving need" of him (p. 72). Helena's professed objections against him do not make him less worthy of her love. Cliff has loving regards for him. Even Alison's father sees that Jimmy has a point. Jimmy has no questions about his own goodness and truthfulness. Yet it seems to me that for Osborne, whether Jimmy is right or wrong is a secondary question. The primary point he is trying to make is that Jimmy *exists* whether we like it or not. Osborne's support of him serves to highlight this fact that Jimmy exists. The author is not so much concerned with Jimmy's goodness or badness but his realness, a question often ignored in the comedies of manners and moral enlightenment.

It must be clear from the comments quoted above that *Look Back in Anger* is far from a perfect play and it is possible to find fault with its various other details. The play has been subjected to more serious criticisms. Gabriel Gersh has a strong temptation "to interpret all its onslaughts on British society as redirected expressions of self-hatred..."<sup>20</sup> Roy Huss treats the play as "a morbid picture of the deteriorating effects of sadomasochism."<sup>21</sup> He finds the play "harrowing" and asserts that it fails "to arouse an aesthetic response."<sup>22</sup> The play invites these reactions. This is, in fact, a part of its purpose. Osborne's main aim in writing his plays is to provoke feelings. "I want to make people feel," he says, "to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards."<sup>23</sup> Whatever we may think of *Look Back in Anger* as a work of art, we cannot deny that it conveys with great effect the spirit of the young generation in England of the mid-century which should be a sufficient reason to give it serious attention.

## NOTES

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## EDWARD ALBEE : BEYOND THE ABSURD

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SHANTA ACHARYA

EDWARD Albee remains one of the most potent influences in the contemporary American theatre. Major American playwrights have been preoccupied with the conflict between illusion and reality : the 'multiple' illusions of *The Iceman Cometh* ; the 'romantic' illusion of *The Glass Menagerie* ; the 'socio.economic' illusions of the *Death of a Salesman*. To Albee the confrontation of reality should be the primary concern of a dramatist. His plays are a conscious attempt to break off in a new direction from a theatre which, according to Albee, had been dedicated to presenting 'a false picture of ourselves to ourselves'.<sup>1</sup> Antiestablishmentarianism, thus, finds a new voice in the plays of Albee.

In the preface to *The American Dream*, Albee states that the play is an 'examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity, it is a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen'.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely because of Albee's savage indictment of the 'American way of life' that Martin Esslin calls him an Absurdist. Even Robert Brustein identifies Albee as a dramatist concerned with an 'existential revolt.' It is true that Albee starts off from the vantage point of the absurdists : he is fully acquainted with their vision : he engages in social criticism and systematically blasts the myth of the 'American Dream' ; he even adopts their analogical method and their style. However, as every discerning critic knows, unlike Beckett or Ionesco, Albee is 'scarcely touched by the sense of living in an absurd universe.'<sup>3</sup>

Albee believed that it was the obligation of a dramatist to make some statement about the condition of man. He gives a new and meaningful voice to man's metaphysical illusion. Albee's philosophical standpoint is entirely alien to that of the European absurdists. His final statement on life and man has none of their ironical despair. He progresses from their sense of darkness, pessimism and anguish to a state of hopeful enlightenment. He accepts Camus' suggested progression from absurdity

to love : 'The end of the movement of absurdity, of rebellion etc....is compassion...that is to say, in the last analysis, love...'<sup>4</sup>

Camus suggested that man 'deprived of illusions.. feels a stranger'<sup>5</sup>. Albee's contention is that absurdity stems from a continued adherence to illusions. Ionesco defines the absurd as 'that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost ; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless'<sup>6</sup>. But to Albee a man remains a man despite all this : it is only when he severs himself away from the reality of his situation that he loses his humanity and becomes absurd. Albee is therefore concerned with the absurdity of illusion rather than the absurdity of reality. He believes that man's impotence and absurdity are of his own making. The absurdist, both as a social force and a thinker, is concerned with the confrontation of man's absurdity, ignorance and impotence. But this revolt of the absurdist is abortive, it leads to nothingness. This sort of revolt is 'impotent and despairing', its characters subhuman, its concern 'human bondage'.<sup>7</sup> Thus Beckett's vision encompasses an anguished awareness both of the absurdity of the human situation as well as of the impossibility of transcending this absurdity and attaining human dignity. Being buried to the neck, lying in a dust-bin, unable to hang themselves from a stunted tree, only reflects man's indignity and impotence. The old couple in Ionesco's *The Chairs* attempting to jump out of the window, the two tramps in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* trying to hang themselves from a stunted tree end in nothing. Man's attempt to snatch dignity and stature is arrested ; heroic possibilities to man are denied. But Albee accepts, what Beckett and Ionesco cannot, that redemption is possible through martyrdom. Jerry in *The Zoo Story* literally 'saves' Peter. Albee reveals a certain faith in man which is alien to the anti-humanist theatre of the Absurd. He believes with Sartre that man 'must decide for himself'.<sup>8</sup> Hence the need of confrontation with reality, for 'people who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction'.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the dignity of man springs from his ability to face reality even in its senselessness, stripped of all illusions. Thus, Albee puts his faith in confrontation with reality as a necessary basis for a meaningful life. All his plays, starting from *The Zoo Story*, are concerned with that 'momentous enlightenment' which leads to a 'real companionship founded on truth and purged of all falsehood'.<sup>10</sup> And as Bigsby aptly puts it, Albee's expressionistic satire is directed not at the 'fatuity of life *per se* but rather the nullity to which a false response reduces it'.<sup>11</sup>

Albee felt that it is one of the 'responsibilities of a playwright to show the people how they are and what their time is like in the hope that perhaps they will change it'. A basically affirmative response to the human situation is reflected in the plays where social ideals are blisteringly attacked, where bourgeois standards are blasted in ridicule, and where the fierce undercurrents of personal relationships are critically examined. Metaphysical solitude, however, still remains at the core of Albee's work. *The Zoo Story* describes the life which man has created for himself as a 'solitary free passage' characterized by indifference towards others. Isolation as a direct result of this attitude towards life is stressed by the image of the zoo which is established in the course of the play. Man has reached such a state of senseless existence that he has come to accept loneliness and isolation as the norms of life. Peter as well as Jerry, George as well as Martha live in islands of their own. This for Albee is absurd; and he strikes out beyond the absurd when he insists on the 'need to make contact, to emerge from these self-imposed cages of convention and false values so that one individual consciousness may impinge on another. This act he defines as love'<sup>12</sup>. Albee would agree with Bellow's Henderson when he says that 'it's love that makes reality'<sup>13</sup>, although it is quite clear that this love is primarily a humanistic concern for others. Just as Arthur Miller is concerned with establishing the 'system of love'<sup>14</sup>, so also for Albee love is a mode of release for us who are condemned to solitary confinement within our skins all our lives. Miller in *After the Fall* is appalled at the ease with which those who are apparently united by love can become 'separate people'. To Albee as to Saul Bellow, the self is seen as a barrier between the individual and humanity. And as Bellow's heroes progress from 'humiliation to humility'<sup>15</sup>, so also Albee's protagonists, who come to understand that genuine existence lies only through the acceptance of reality and the establishment of true relationship between individuals. Both Jerry in *The Zoo Story* and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* exemplify Albee's faith.

*The New York Times* described *The Zoo Story* as 'a harrowing portrait of a young man alienated from the human race'. But such an assessment stops short at seizing Albee's intentions. Ironically, the play illustrates that this alienated individual—called Jerry—has more sense of the urgency of human contact: 'But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, *really talk*; like to get to *know* somebody, know *all* about him' (Italics mine), (Z.S. p. 17).

Jerry has reached a moment of crisis in his life and this has made him conscious of the enormous gulf that separates him from his fellowmen.

As he admits, 'I don't talk to many people—except to say like : give me a beer, or where's the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your hands to yourself, buddy' (Z.S. P. 17). Jerry's isolation and lack of a vital relationship with any thing beyond himself is evident in his 'great weariness' (Z.S. P. 11). Willy Loman in Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is also a man 'tried to the death'. (D.S. P. 131). George in *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* confesses at the beginning of the play : 'I'm tired'. This sense of exhaustion apparent in these characters reflects their deep sense of alienation. Both Jerry and George are outsiders ; both are alienated from home. If they are irremediable exiles it is because they are deprived of memories of a lost home. And their bitterly passionate and ironical vociferations about home reflect the chilling decadence of family-ties, the breaking up of bonds that prove shattering to a child's uncomprehending consciousness. As C. Wright Mills analyses, one of the characteristic psychological features of the American social structure today is its systematic creation and maintenance of estrangement from society and from childhood. Jerry has no home, no relatives, no human bondage. He is a 'permanent transient' in the 'greatest city in the world' (Z.S. P. 37.). And this is a sort of refrain that manifests itself in several images employed by Albee. Jerry is symbolically surrounded by objects which are incomplete ; empty picture frames, a strong box without a lock. The sense of fragmentariness in the life of Jerry is accentuated in his relationship with the 'pretty little ladies' whom he never dates more than once, and with the inhabitants of his Westside Apartment about whom he knows nothing. And the Westside Apartment houses bring to our mind the image of a cage. It is interesting to correlate that New York city was planned out in squares. The image of boxes rise immediately to our mind. It is a zoo-city and men are animals. Jerry insists on the validity of the zoo as an image of human beings consciously cut off from each other.

This is, however, a partial statement of the predicament, for Jerry has come to realize the urgent need for human contact. Ironically, this lesson Jerry derives from a dog : 'I loved the dog now, and I wanted him to love me...I hoped that the dog would understand...It's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS' (Z.S. P. 34). Jerry is obsessed with the vital need to communicate, to pass on the message that he had received from the dog. But Peter's evaluation of life ranks income and status before communication. Peter is a conformist bourgeois, belonging to the group designated, by urban sociologists, as 'organisation men.' Peter reads *Time* magazine.



knows about Freud and Baudelaire, talks about 'catholicity of taste' (Z.S. P. 21), but lacks sensibility. The book that he reads symbolizes an aspect of his personality that prefers a vicarious experiencing of reality rather than a direct confrontation with it. Peter clings to the 'American dream' and tries to escape from his loneliness by accepting the illusion of harmony and happiness that his life style supports. Like the embodiment of the American dream in the young Man who lacks the ability to 'feel' or to 'love', Peter has been effectively emasculated by allowing himself to be numbed by the illusions that society fosters. George sums it up very aptly in *Virginia Woolf*? thus : 'a gradual, over-the-years going to sleep of the brain cells.'<sup>16</sup> It is this impotency, this inhuman complacency of the establishment that Albee attacks.

According to Karl Jaspers, modern society has detached itself from fundamentals and has created a new system of values that believes in the pursuit of material wealth and technological efficiency. This system of values Miller defines as the 'law of success' that is contending for supremacy in this world. This law, according to Miller, 'serves more to raise our anxieties than to reassure us of the existence of an unseen but humane metaphysical system in the world.'<sup>17</sup> Miller attempts to counter this anxiety with the opposing 'system of love.' These new values console man with the feeling that he is progressing, but at the same time make him neglect fundamental forces of his inner life. To both Miller and Albee the law of love adds further dimension to the immense possibilities of man for redemption. *The Zoo Story* is concerned with redemption, for Peter is not only brought into a new and a more meaningful understanding of reality but is also introduced to the dire need for that genuine human contact which is the very antithesis of absurdity.

Jerry attempts to establish rapport with Peter, to impose upon him the urgency of human contact. But Peter, in his cocoon of illusions, refuses to draw out of it. Jerry attempts to rip open the mask that Peter wears, and this he achieves by going 'a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly' (Z.S. P. 30); and thus he explains to Peter the source of his own conversion by describing a macabre duel which he had fought with a dog. This dog was not exactly 'indifferent' to him for the dog attacked him each time he entered his rooming-house. Jerry, at first anxious to avoid 'contact', tried to kill the dog with kindness. It was only when the dog was dying that he suddenly realized that some sort of communication had been possible between him and the dog : 'I wanted the dog to live so that I could see what our new relationship might come to'. (Z.S. P. 33). And it was at this point that he started loving the dog; that he 'mad

contact' with the dog : 'And was trying to feed the dog an act of love ? And, perhaps, was the dog's attempt to bite not an act of love ? If we can so misunderstand, well then, why have we invented the word love in the first place ?' (Z.S. P. 36.)

It was this message, which Jerry had derived from the dog, that he wanted to communicate to Peter. But Peter refuses to understand because he is not prepared to face reality. However, Jerry is prepared to convey this piece of knowledge at any price ; he is even prepared to sacrifice his life. If Jerry has a fuller and a deeper understanding of humanity, it is because he is excluded from the dehumanizing world of success and competition to which Peter belongs. If Jerry's idealism becomes violent it is precisely because he is alienated, detached from institutions. Jerry's intellectual and moral pre-eminence is a function of his exclusion from the mainstream of the society in which he lives. Unlike Peter, he has rejected the absurdity inherent in social ideals of success. Jerry's cry for relevance is that one's life makes sense. His preparedness or 'ripeness'<sup>18</sup> to make life meaningful in itself reflects a positive response to life.

Albee is thus concerned with stressing the inadequacy and limitations of a persistent belief in illusion—an illusion which is, in essence, the 'American Dream'. Peter succumbs to its illusions which have left him hollow and unaware of the 'need' of others. Thus, to Jerry's question : 'Don't you have any idea, not even the slightest, what other people need ?' Peter replies : 'Well, you don't *need* this bench' (Z.S. P. 45). Peter's defence of the bench implies a defence of the solitariness and absurdity of the human condition, as well as a defence of the values of a success-oriented society. To Albee, such abstractions, like the American dream, sever an individual's direct relationship with actuality, because the watch-word of this success-ridden culture is 'non-involvement'. Peter complains to Jerry : 'I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE' (Z.S. P. 37.). Honey in *Virginia Woolf* ? does not 'want to know anything' (V.W. P. 178). Nick preserves his 'scientific detachment in the face of...life' (V.W. P. 100). And even attempts at establishing any kind of communion are scornfully rejected :

George : (After a silence) I've tried to...reach you...to...

Nick : (Contemptuously)...Make contact ? (V.W. P. 116).

Albee scathingly denounces this attitude of escapism, and supplants it with one of confrontation and acceptance.

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has been wrongly interpreted by some critics as a persistent escape into morbid fantasy. Albee is not concerned with the perpetuation of illusion, but rather with the destruction of it. He insists on the need to 'take one's life in one's arms'. As Quentin says in *After the Fall*, 'despair can be a way of life ; but you have to believe in it, pick it up, take it to heart and move on again.'<sup>19</sup> *Virginia Woolf?* is indeed concerned with the exorcism of illusion. Here then is Albee's point of view that 'neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect beyond themselves, and that the two combined, together, ..are the teaching emotion'. (Z.S. P. 35-36). Thus, at the climactic point of the play, there is a subtle fusion of 'cruelty' with 'kindness'. George kills their imaginary child in a bold attempt to confront reality and enable Martha to do so.

Martha : HE IS OUR CHILD.

George : AND I HAVE KILLED HIM (V.W. P. 237).

George finally succeeds in bringing Martha to realize, with a 'hint of communion' in it, that they could not have any children.

George : *We* couldn't.

Martha : (a hint of communication in this) *We* couldn't (V.W P. 238).

And finally the play ends with a note of softness that speaks of communion—a communion that springs from an acceptance of reality. Indeed as Alan Schneider, the play's Broadway director has pointed out : '...is Albee not rather dedicated to smashing that rosy view, shocking us with the truth of our present day behaviour and thought, striving to purge us into an actual confrontation with reality'?<sup>20</sup> Confrontation with reality is then the basis of Albee's plays. Thus, at the end of the play, we have the image of man in all his nakedness, stripped of all illusions. This is a positive acceptance of human limitations. Thus George and Martha together accept the joint responsibility of their inability to have children. But the world here is not sterile because the ending does hold out the hope of 'a real companionship, founded on truth and purged of all falsehood.'

To Albee then genuine justification of life lies not only in man's preparedness to face reality but also in re-establishing the prime importance of human contact. And it is in the confrontation of reality that he sees a mature response to life. Thus, man is no longer depicted as a vegetable or a passive victim. Dignity and manhood are finally conferred on him.

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## SWEENEY'S CONVERSION

PRASANTA KUMAR SEN

COME, let us desert our wives, and fly to a land where there are no Medici prints, nothing but concubinage and conversation. Oxford is very pretty, but I don't like to be dead.

Eliot's letter from Oxford to Conrad Aiken  
(*F. S. Eliot : A Symposium*, ed., March and Tambimuttu.)

I remember a moment under a fig-tree in one of the inland boulevards of the seaside town, Orwell striding beside me and saying in his flat, ageless voice : 'You know, Connolly, there's only one remedy for all diseases ?' I felt the usual guilty tremor when sex was mentioned and hazarded. 'You mean going to the lavatory ?' 'No---I mean Death'.

Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*.

### I

W. H. Auden in a shrewd piece of analysis likened Eliot's inner world to a household of at least three incompatible members. First there is an Anglican Reverend "who believes in and practices order, discipline, and good manners, social and intellectual" ; then there is "a violent and passionate old peasant grandmother, who has witnessed murder, rape, pogroms, famine, flood, fire, everything ; who has looked into the abyss and, unless restrained, would scream the house down" ; and last, "there is a young boy who likes to play slightly malicious jokes".<sup>1</sup> And this is not simply a piece of Auden's grotesque fancy. All attentive readers of Eliot have had an inkling of some such turbulent household. Emphasis may certainly vary depending on which aspect of Eliot's personality seems to a particular reader at a particular time to be more engaging. Edmund Wilson<sup>2</sup> likewise, paying perhaps a bit more attention to that side of Eliot which is sombre and sleek, has detected the presence of two other figures besides the Anglican Clergyman, a 'formidable professor' and a 'genteel Bostonian'. But Wilson is also aware of the presence of a 'rascal',—a rascal that makes fun of the public image, 'the unpleasant Mr. Eliot',

With his features of clerical cut,  
 And his brow so grim  
 And his mouth so prim  
 And his conversation, so nicely  
 Restricted to What Precisely  
 And If and Perhaps and But.<sup>3</sup>

One can of course go on multiplying the presences at will, but we think that Auden's characterisation is sufficiently varied and comprehensive, needing no repetitive supplement and affording as it is a marked critical advantage. Not only does it lend crucial insight into some of the obscure passages and poems but it makes some of the apparent changes and discontinuities of Eliot's career appear more meaningful and cogent. No one would perhaps deny that in Eliot's career as a poet 1927, the year of his conversion, stands as a dividing watershed. From the *Ariel Poems* onwards Eliot's poems take on a tone quite different from that of the earlier poems. Not only does he assume a decidedly Christian or religious frame of reference; he views the world with a more sympathetic understanding and tolerance. There is exasperation, to be sure, a sort of tired irritation at human folly, but that savage irony, that thin-lipped mockery which marks so many of his earlier poems has vanished. There is yet another change. In Eliot's early poems one notices a yearning for, exultation in, violence and irresponsible animal gestures as providing escape from the strained complexity of civilized behaviour, and especially as a way out from emotional deadlocks. This trait stretches from the 'aesthetic' murder in 'Nocturne' ('The perfect climax all true lovers seek!'), through the sudden, liberating inspiration of the young man in the 'Portrait' to "dance, dance/Like a dancing bear,/Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape", to the impotent jealousy of the Hollow Men of the "lost/Violent souls". The two characteristics are complementary and spring from the same source. On one occasion both these early traits drive home their thrusts through a single line: 'The last twist of the knife'.<sup>4</sup> In Eliot's later poetry and plays both the violence and the animal imagery persist; but these operate within a different framework and have a different import.

The insight of Auden is particularly effective in explaining these shifts in emphasis and meaning. But its greatest efficacy lies in explaining the development of the Sweeney myth: a development which reflects the earlier tendencies of the poet more fully and explicitly than anything else, as well as clarifies the new direction they are gradually taking. "The conversion to Christianity", Eliot has remarked, "is apt to be due.....to

a latent dissatisfaction with all secular philosophy, becoming, perhaps, with apparent suddenness, explicit and coherent."<sup>5</sup> The history of Sweeney provides purely *internal* evidence as to how this dissatisfaction has been growing in the early Eliot and how it leads to a break through. Conversion has not meant for Eliot a rejection of his poetic past, but a revaluation of it; the activating forces remain the same, only they undergo a regrouping or reorientation. The change in the post-conversion poetry is the reflex of a hidden change, a product of what Jung calls 'individuation,'<sup>6</sup> of which Sweeney has been both an agent and an instrument.

In Eliot's poetry Sweeney has the unique distinction of figuring in five different poems written roughly over a period of eight years. He makes his appearance about 1918 in 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' and 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales,' and the last work in which he figures pre-eminently as the hero, *Sweeney Agonistes*, was published in the *New Criterion* in 1926 and 1927 though Eliot had begun writing it in 1924. In a literal sense, therefore, Sweeney showed Eliot right up to the gate of the Anglican Church. That no more was heard of him in the later poems and plays may be due to two reasons. It may be, first, that Eliot had to disengage himself from this scandalous companionship as part of his preparation for religious conversion; the repentant sinner, it has been implied, could not after all go to the Church with such an ape-man for a protégé or consort. Both C. H. Smith and Katharine Worth draw attention to this difficulty in explaining Eliot's inability to finish the projected play: though it must be conceded that they point to other difficulties as well which are largely technical.<sup>7</sup>

But there is another possibility. Is it, after all, so utterly inconceivable that Sweeney too should enter the Church, undergo a conversion? We think not. True, he becomes so inextricably fused in the later poems with the august Anglican Churchman that his voice can hardly be distinguished from the low, solemn bass of his formidable *alter ego*. But does not this fusion itself constitute a proof that Eliot has not left him at the Church gate to enter the precincts alone? The presence of the peasant grandmother, together of course with Milton's Samson, can be detected in the fairly long passage with which Section III of 'East Coker' opens: 'O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,...' We may consider another passage, this time from 'The Dry Salvages' (II):

The moments of happiness—not the sense  
of well-being,

Fruition, fulfilment, security or affection,

Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination

In the interjection about 'a very good dinner' the impish boy, the practical joker, bursts in momentarily but is immediately silenced by the Reverend. Now, if we try the experiment of blending it with the 'O dark dark' passage, we arrive at a voice very much like that of Sweeney. For Sweeney is a composite product; his strength and effectiveness, his unmistakably individual timbre, is derived from the alliance of the peasant grandmother, with her reservoir of primeval memories,—one who is ready to deflate the noblest enthusiasm with a hysterical cry or a timely reminder of some forgotten terror,—and her pampered and spoilt grandson.

In the poems up to and including *The Waste Land* this alliance can be seen in operation, forming the dark and insidious substratum that leaps out now and then in a flash like a Brazilian jaguar to overwhelm its victim, either a respectable but thin-blooded person or an equally respectable idea or institution. This dialectic is present in the opposition between Prufrock and the ghosts he invokes,—Lazarus, Michelangelo, Hamlet and John the Baptist. But as the 'Love Song' is a multi-dimensional poem, the contrast works at different levels at once—between Prufrock and the Ladies, between the Ladies and the mermaids, but most significantly, between what Prufrock is, a timid, punctilious fool, and what he wishes to become, 'a pair of ragged claws'. The dialectic can be seen most clearly at work in 'Mr. Apollinax',—in the opposition between Mr. Apollinax on the one hand and Mrs. Phlaccus, Professor and Mrs. Cheetah and their social set on the other,—and in 'The Hippopotamus'.

However, as we proceed along, the balance tilts gradually in the opposite direction; the sombre churchman acquires more and more power and authority. Early indications as to how things would turn out ultimately are perhaps dimly present in 'Aunt Helen' and 'Cousin Nancy' and a few hints scattered in the *Prufrock* volume and *Ara Vos Prec* (1920). But on the whole the progress is a steady, gradual unfoldment. A momentary equipoise is established in *The Waste Land* which ends not only with the enigmatic, quizzical outburst of Hieronymo, 'Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe', but also with the solemn recital of Aryan wisdom: 'Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata./Shantih shantih shantih'. To witness a complete reversal we have to wait until the *Ariel Poems*, or more precisely, until *Ash Wednesday*. In the latter specially, the Clergyman has assumed full control. But he has not, as might be expected in the case of a poet of less integrity, driven out the furious grandmother and his puckish grandson; rather, he has imbibed them, that is to say, assimilated and absorbed their peculiar powers and potencies. Indeed, it is this assimilation that makes Eliot's religious poetry convincing and credible.



In this essay it is our purpose to show how this transformation is effected from the fragmentary record we have at our disposal, *Sweeney Agonistes*. We regret that in none of the other poems in which Sweeney figures have we been granted 'the inestimable privilege of listening' to him, to use a phrase Marlow used while recollecting the magic effect of Kurtz's voice, and also that the epic about King Bolo and his Queen, which could have served as effective supplement, does not seem to have survived in the oral tradition. Our contention is that Sweeney did not, like Virgil in the *Divine Comedy*, merely accompany Eliot to the gate of the Anglican Church, himself to return to some painless but unregenerate Limbo. He too crossed the threshold.

That he is seen or heard no more in the later poems is due to the fact that after the conversion he was so thoroughly integrated in the personality of the matured Eliot that he ceased to have a separate identity. He could, at best, with part of his being animate a phrase, a line, a passage or a character. He fulfilled himself, attained his goal, and thereby outlasted his usefulness in the dialectical process in which he was needed as a term of contrast, as soon as the opposites were synthesised. Eliot's poetry remains dialectical to the very end, but in those higher, that is, more developed phases, Sweeney has no effective part to play.

## II

What we have said above is intended to suggest, among other things, that Eliot's Sweeney-vision has two aspects. It is certainly right to regard Sweeney, as indeed he has almost always been regarded, as a person or persona. This is apparently implicit in Conrad Aiken's tentative suggestion that he might have been modelled on a certain Steve O'Donnell with whom Eliot took boxing lessons in Boston, which is apparently corroborated by Eliot's own statement that he thought of Sweeney 'as a man who in younger days was perhaps a pugilist, mildly successful; who then grew older and retired to keep a pub'.<sup>8</sup> But such a view though acceptable within its limits is an over-simplification. Sweeney has an ideational aspect; and it is precisely for this reason that the Sweeney-problem is so integral to Eliot's career as a poet and dramatist. Only when we are fully conscious of this duality are we in a position to appreciate the status of Sweeney, and the meaning of his gradual development in Eliot's pre-conversion poetry. As an agent he remains the same Sweeney throughout, though as an ideational instrument, as an

agency, he is changing all the time and in *Sweeney Agonistes*, is on the verge of metamorphosis. Failure to comprehend the dual aspect of Sweeney inevitably leads to misunderstanding. F. O. Matthiessen's complaint that the hero of *Sweeney Agonistes* "is so different a character from the 'apeneck Sweeney' of the poems that Eliot might better have given him a different name",<sup>9</sup> is a typical instance of this kind of misunderstanding.

T. H. Thompson strives hard to solve this problem by fabricating a regular detective story from what he considers to be deliberately supplied hints.

"Sweeney of course is the central figure of the story, and the reader is the detective. From scattered hints and clues, from dark sayings and mysterious exclamation, we are left to unfold for ourselves the sordid little tale."<sup>10</sup>

Thompson is wrong from the start ; by concentrating on the detective interest he undermines the dynamics of development on which everything depends. Indeed he barter away Sweeney for a flimsy figment, his 'sordid little tale'. If it be argued that Thompson proffered his story as an elaborate joke, then too it would appear that his labours have been largely self-defeating ; the 'joke' is so coldblooded, so earnestly pursued and meticulously framed—in other words, so much lacking in imaginative daring and spontaneity,—that it is not even laughable.

Different though their conclusions are, both Matthiessen and Thompson share the hypothesis that Sweeney is an odd person whose characteristics remain (or ought to remain) fixed once for all. Seen in this light Matthiessen's bafflement seems more honest than Thomson's cleverness. From the beginning Eliot leaves us in no doubt as to the conceptual aspect of the character, about what Sweeney stands for. Let us take, as an example, 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' (1918)—a satirical poem that brings in the contrast so powerfully manipulated in 'The Hippopotamus' (1917) for a re-examination. The central contrast is between the enervate Origen and Sweeney, the first physically impotent (Origen castrated himself, it is said, for a more concentrated devotion to God) and yet 'Polyphiloprogenitive', eminently fertile in supplying an astounding corpus of doctrinal and exegetical literature, whereas the other is the very symbol of sexuality. To see in this contrast only a variant of the traditional contrast between the body and the mind or soul, would be too narrowly reductive and, therefore, false ; for side by

side with it there is built up through the imagery a correspondence between the baptism of Christ and Sweeney's bath.

Sweeney shifts from ham to ham  
 Stirring the water in his bath.  
 The masters of the subtle schools  
 Are controversial, polymath.

There can be no doubt as to where the sympathy of the poet is lodged. It is being clearly implied that, like the Hippo who is enfolded in 'heavenly arms' while the Church as an institution remains 'Wrapt in the old miasmal mist', Sweeney is nearer to Christ in spirit than the polymath masters of the 'subtle schools' whose souls 'Burn invisible and dim'.

Sweeney has been commonly characterised as an ordinary sensual man, *l'homme moyen sensuel*, and so indeed he is, with the sole peculiarity that in him this sensuality appears as something detached and incongruous. The neat Aristotelian definition cannot fully accommodate him but at the same time cannot outright discard him. In him man's pre-history appears in so monstrous, separable, exaggerated a form that he is better called a human-animal than simply man. As such, he is a terrible creature, for he is a constant reminder of that side of human nature which is most 'Susceptible to nervous shock' and most vulnerable to mockery. And the vanity of man is nowhere more apparent than in the fact that, in spite of daily proof to the contrary, he would still fondly believe in his invulnerability, his self-sufficiency, and is mortally afraid of appearing ridiculous. Even Origen's drastic solution is a short-cut, not so much a solution as an escape, and fraught with its characteristic danger: spiritual pride. And for men who are born castrated and who on that account, take a huge delight in their invulnerability, Blake's epigram serves quite well: 'Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained.'<sup>11</sup> One may here recall that Eliot commended Blake on this "peculiar honesty, which, in a world too frightened to be honest, is peculiarly terrifying".<sup>12</sup> His own Sweeney is a product of a vision no less honest and no less terrifying.

Sweeney has this corrective function: he draws attention to our deliberate omissions, omissions calculated to pamper our vanities and soothe our dulness.

(The lengthened shadow of a man  
 Is history, said Emerson  
 Who had not seen the silhouette  
 Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.)<sup>13</sup>

If Waldo Emerson, with all his good intentions, did not, like the Romantic poets, know enough, if he averted his eyes from the dark abyss of erratic instinctual drives that lie at the bottom of human nature, he had only himself to blame. In acclaiming man's erected frame, his assured and willed self-reliance, he missed an obvious pun and thereby, falsified not only man but history. He failed, in other words, to come up with anything more fundamental than a copy-book maxim. Sweeney evinces the fault of the eager moralist by simply assuming an 'erect' position, just as in the previous poem he supplied a potent contrast by stirring up water in a bathtub and exposing his naked posterior.

Sweeney is an antagonist and, potentially at least, a powerful one. And yet in the early poems he is made more a dumb victim, a clumsy laughing-stock, than an aggressor; rightly so, for he has not as yet seen through the pompous facade of civilization to its hollow interior, nor come to a full consciousness of himself. He moves rather awkwardly among females whose company he is driven instinctively to seek, but who, in their turn, despise him for his ungainly gestures and ignorance of the rules of etiquette. This double discomfort almost precipitates a tragedy in 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' (1918). The epigraph from Aeschylus where Agamemnon cries out in mortal agony, as well as the portentous atmosphere of the poem, makes one apprehensive. Sweeney, it seems, is done for. He averts the tragedy though by taking advantage of fore-lock time, by declining the gambit and showing fatigue. In other words, he cheats his fate; and the 'golden grin' he allows himself while peeping in malicious triumph into the room, looks unearthly, apparitional, as if he were a ghost resurrected from coffin. In the mean time, the bells have been set tolling; the nightingales have begun to sing in eager compliance with what their human namesakes have planned for and almost executed.

In the course of Sweeney's development 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' marks an abrupt turning point. By cheating death of a victim he escapes Agamemnon's fate,—only to partake of that of Orestes. It befalls him to be pursued by the Furies and to reap the painful knowledge. In this respect, he has more in common with Oedipus or Samson than with Agamemnon, and Eliot makes a shrewd last-minute adjustment by taking him out of the bath-tub and getting him into the grove of the Furies. Like the blind and wise Oedipus, it is now Sweeney's task to speak out. But before we hear him speak for the first and last time, he is heard of once more in *The Waste Land*.

But at my back from time to time I hear  
 The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring  
 Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

The lines adapt a passage from John Day's *The Parliament of Bees* :

When of a sudden, listening, you shall hear,  
 A noise of hours and hutting, which shall bring  
 Actaeon to Diana in the Spring,  
 Where all shall see her naked skin.

Significantly, Sweeney's coming is no actual fact. It is expected : it is rumoured. If Tiresias has fore-suffered his fate already, he knows well enough that Sweeney has outgrown his Actaeon stage ; he has known quite enough of Dianas to allow them the satisfaction once more of first turning him into a stag and then pulling him down by his own hounds. But perhaps he does come after all, and performs what Nevill Coghill calls 'the wrong surgery'<sup>14</sup>—that is to say, does Mrs Porter in. Nothing, however, is known for certain. "This one didn't get pinched in the end," says Sweeney and hints at another, untold, story. All one knows for certain is that a few years after he would reappear again to view, this time to contemplate the necessity of having to divest oneself of the love of created things, -not only of 'horns and motors' but of Dianas as well.

### III

"No one on stage has the faintest idea what Sweeney is talking about," says Hugh Kenner.<sup>15</sup> And not only for the inmates of Miss Dorrance's flat, but even for the persons in the auditorium it becomes difficult at times to keep pace with Sweeney's jerky and portentous speeches. There is, however some consolation in the knowledge that this is what the dramatist himself intended. "I once designed," Eliot wrote a few years after the publication of the fragments, "and drafted a couple of scenes, of a verse play. My intention was to have one character whose sensibility and intelligence should be on the plane of the most sensitive and intelligent members of the audience : his speeches should be addressed to them as much as to the other personages in the play—or rather, should be addressed to the latter, who were to be material, literal-minded and visionless, with the consciousness of being overheard by the former. There was to be an understanding between this protagonist and a small number of the audience, while the rest of the audience would share the

responses of the other characters in the play."<sup>16</sup> In his essay on John Marston (1934), Eliot takes up to again this theme of 'doubleness in the action' but here he speaks of this doubleness as a general characteristic of the poetic drama as distinguished from prose drama, and differentiates it from allegory or symbolism, which are "operations of the conscious planning mind." The author singled out as providing the best examples of this under-pattern is Dostoevsky, some of whose characters give the impression "that they are living at once on the plane that we know and on some other plane of reality from which we are shut out: their behaviour does not seem crazy, but rather in conformity with the laws of some world that we cannot perceive.....In the work of a genius of a lower order, such as that of the author of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the characters themselves hardly attain this double reality; we are aware rather of the author, operating perhaps not quite consciously through them, and making use of them to express something of which he himself may not be quite conscious."<sup>17</sup>

It is easy to see that Eliot's success in *Sweeney Agonistes*, as indeed in all his plays, is not of the kind achieved by Dostoevsky; it rather falls to the pattern of the 'work of genius of the lower order'. Essentially a poet, Eliot hardly ever succeeds in providing a mass of significant action which would hold out an independent interest. More often, his principal characters find inadequate support within the structural limits of his plots and as a result, have to derive assistance from props pitched on the outer space of the author's mind. In the case of *Sweeney Agonistes* this limitation is less obviously a defect; the poetic antecedents of the skit not only provide a fitting background but also show Eliot in secure possession of the basic elements of the Sweeney-idea. It has to be admitted, nonetheless, that these advantages make *Sweeney Agonistes* more of a finished poem than an unfinished play.<sup>18</sup>

But be that as it may, Eliot had set out to write a play; and with the definite end of revitalizing the all but extinct *genre* of verse drama capable of dealing with the double reality, he went principally to two sources—the music hall comedy and such anthropological works as F. M. Cornford's *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (1914) and Jane Harrison's *Themis* (1912). His own individual contribution, important in itself, though it appears more important when we see it, as Katharine Worth<sup>19</sup> does, in the perspective of the 'living theatre' of the fifties and sixties—was in perceiving and establishing the underlying connection between the two. In 'A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry' (1928) E says "with the support of the scholars whom B mentions (viz., Miss Harrison, Mr. Cornford

and Professor Gilbert Murray and others), that drama springs from religious liturgy, and that it cannot afford to depart far from religious liturgy.' B then takes up the point once more, adding a new emphasis : "But we are human beings, and crave representations in which we are conscious, and critical, of these other realities. We cannot be aware solely of divine realities. We must be aware also of human realities... Hence we want the human drama, related to the divine drama, but not the same, as well as Mass." C then discovers a nearly finished example of the desired blend in the 'suburban drama' :

"Take the humour of our great English comedian, Ernie Lotinga. It is (if you like) bawdy. But such bawdiness is a tribute to, an acknowledgement of conventional British morality...our suburban drama is morally sound, and out of such soundness poetry may come. Human nature does not change."<sup>20</sup> The upshot of this discussion can be summed up in Eliot's own words :

Little Tich, George Robey, Nellie Wallace, Marie Lloyd...provide fragments of a possible English myth. They effect the Comic Purgation.<sup>21</sup>

Eliot's own efforts were directed to carrying this programme forward and giving the emerging myth a characteristic religious direction. He attempted, in other words, to reunite drama with ritual and, by curing it of its unhealthy hunger for photographic realism, make it reclaim myth as its proper domain. Though in *Sweeney Agonistes* he could finish only fragments of a Prologue and an Agon out of the seven-part structure of a typical Greek Comedy, he does succeed in linking it with the Phallic rituals in which Cornford discovered the 'nucleus of comedy'. Viewed anthropologically the function of Sweeney is that of the year-god who dies only to rise anew, to be reunited with Mother Goddess. "The Agon," says Cornford, "is the beginning of the sacrifice in its primitive dramatic form—the conflict between the good and evil principles, Summer and Winter, Life and Death."<sup>22</sup> Taking his cue from Miss Weston's formulation about the higher, astral initiation, which lends itself easily to Christian interpretation, Eliot gives this primitive drama a new turn and makes Life emerge out of Death. Sweeney's affinity with Orestes (and hence with Hamlet) in this respect is made evident through the epigraph from *Choephori* :

*Orestes* : You don't see them, you don't—but I see them :  
They are hunting me down, I must move on.

Gilbert Murray in an interesting article, 'Hamlet and Orestes', ascertains the derivation of both the stories from the same fertility ritual ;

and, following the Greek scholar, Hermann Usener, he specifically identifies Orestes as a 'Winter-God, a slayer of Summer'.

He is the man of the cold mountains who slays annually the Red Neoptolemus at Delphi ; he is the ally of death and the dead ; he comes suddenly in the dark ; he is mad and raging, like the Winter-god Maimaktes and the November storms.<sup>22</sup>

Sweeney also storms and rages and proclaims the monstrous necessity of doing a girl in. But though this similarity is essential, yet he must be seen as pursuing a unique and individual course. Eliot thoroughly 'Christianizes' the myth and balances the first epigraph from *Choephori* by a second one, from St. John of the Cross :

"Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created things." For Sweeney, however, divine union does not seem to be *too* imminent a possibility ; for him the Erinnys have not yet turned into the Eumenides. But he does seem to have been forced to make up his mind ; and he has sighted his direction : and, therefore, he must move on.

#### IV

The journey starts from Doris's flat, that is, the world of which she or Dusty or Mrs. Porter is the presiding deity. It is, like the drawing rooms frequented by Prufrock, a closed world—a world that is impervious to the greater world lying outside, *given* in experience, and maintained by a tacit contract among the inmates not to disturb its blessed illusion by asking awkward questions or making awkward demands. In *The Hollow Men* this world is called 'death's dream Kingdom' to which the only welcome visitors are those who know how to agree—with anybody, over practically anything. Disagreement brings doubt and doubt erodes its foundation. Not only that ; it stands in need of continual professions of unanimity which provide the inmates with an unceasing occasion for talk, thereby helping them to tide over the tedium of silence. In 'Prufrock' too the women talk incessantly of Michelangelo ; no doubt they are unanimous, but they say the same things over and over again. In Doris's flat the most eagerly expected guest is a 'gentleman' like Sam who knows how 'to make you laugh' without overreaching the boundary. Doris likes Sam ; Dusty likes Sam ; but neither of them likes Pereira, even though he pays the rent, that is to say, bears the establishment cost. He is 'no gentleman', he is unpredictable,—'you never know what he's going to do'.



He violates the gentleman's contract, it appears, by making too frequent and too sombre telephone calls, and making importunate demands to get his money's worth.

But Pereira won't do.

We can't have Pereira,

says Doris. Dusty agrees; she even invents a fib to put him off if only for the present. The world of Dusty and Doris is a precarious one.

So long as 'a nice boy' like Loot Sam Wauchope does not come and make them laugh, the girls keep up the palaver and semblance of animation by drawing court cards. It is a safe game apparently: the cards can be made to tell what they want to have told, and even add some variety and thrill by mirroring their closed world. But the cards too conceal a potential menace: they too sometimes remind the girls of things and persons they want to forget. More devastatingly still, they sometimes trespass into the region of the great unknown. 'Men are afraid of death as children are afraid of the night', said the naturalist, Francis Bacon. Dusty and Doris are afraid of both. Thus the King of Clubs, Dusty says, is Pereira. Doris says it might mean Sweeney. But whatever the difference between their interpretations, both are equally undesirable. Still here there is some ambiguity, some elbow room for interpretation. About the *two of spades* there is no such scope: **THAT'S THE COFFIN**. Dusty sets about, ritually to mitigate the import 'Well it needn't be yours, it may mean a friend' But Doris is in utter desperation:

No it's mine. I'm sure it's mine.

I dreamt of weddings all last night.

A **COFFIN** is, as irrevocably as Gertrude Stein's Rose, a **COFFIN** is a **COFFIN**. The cards are mimics and mimicry is great fun; but too close a mimicry is sometimes as dangerous, as awesome, as life itself.

Into this panicky world, hanging in a precarious balance on the edge of a precipice and craving to be perpetually consoled that the precipice is not there, that the apple that fell on Newton's head did not, in fact, come downward but flew, enters Sweeney in his new role as agonistes, meaning a competitor. Always a misfit in this company, he is now out to destroy this protected haven. He lures his victims with an enigmatic bait:

I'll carry you off

To a cannibal isle.

But as Doris does not know how to respond, what part to assume, or how to assimilate this proffered savage into the sphere of her existence, Sweeney lends her a hand : "You'll be the missionary !", and then goes on in the violent strain :

I'll gobble you up. I'll be the cannibal.

Doris now finds her way out ; of course, she has read in the papers, or heard from some other authentic source, how the missionaries convert cannibals into peaceable Christians and turn them little by little into good secular citizens of democracy. She sees the fun and the sexual pun, and accepts her part.

I'll be the missionary.

I'll convert you.

Sweeney continues the threat,—

I'll convert you !

Into a stew.

... but immediately after, for some unknown reason seems to change his mind and the direction of his verbal assault and proposes, instead of of the 'Cannibal isle,' the 'crocodile isle'.

You see this egg

You see this egg

Well that's life on a crocodile isle.

There are no telephones, no gramophones, no motor cars,

Nothing to eat but the fruit as it grows.

Nothing to see but the palm-trees one way

And the sea the other way,

Nothing to hear but the sound of the surf.

Nothing at all but three things

Doris : What things ?

Sweeney : Birth, and copulation, and death.

But Doris is not cultivated enough to meet this challenge on scholarly grounds : she has not consulted Montaigne on the Cannibals, nor heard of Rousseau's 'noble savage.' Her defence mechanism crumbles. "I'd be bored," she says, giving Sweeney scope to indulge his private agonies.

You'd be bored.

Birth, and copulation, and death.

That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks :

Birth, and copulation, and death.

I've been born and once is enough,  
 You don't remember, but I remember,  
 Once is enough.

To get at Sweeney's meaning one may compare this with the last lines of 'Journey of the Magi.'

There was a Birth, certainly,  
 We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
 But had thought they were different ; this Birth was  
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our Death  
 ...                    ...                    ...                    ...                    ...  
 I should be glad of another death.

For Sweeney as for the Magus birth and death have become interchangeable : to be born into new life one has to die and this death, which is sacrifice, is the necessary precondition of birth. To see the Birth, that is, the mystery of Incarnation, the Magus had to die on the way ; he has to die again to be born anew : a process that, he says, he would gladly undergo. Sweeney too, it will appear, has died once. He has, in other words, experienced death in life ; he is to make an agonising completion by discovering life in death. He shudders at the prospect of having to be born anew.

We are impelled at this point to re-examine the beginning of the Agon. We notice now that the death-resurrection pattern is present in the very first lines as part of the complex connotation of the 'Cannibal isle,' and also, that when Sweeney lends Doris her cue (You'll be the missionary !), he was not being just frivolously macabre. Eliot is here deliberately practising a trick for which he extolled Marvell, viz., the "alliance of levity and seriousness (by which the seriousness is intensified.)"<sup>24</sup> The conversion motif is real and urgent, though presented under the cover of Empsonian ambiguity. There is a two-fold justification for this round-about procedure. First, it is natural and characteristic for Sweeney to talk of conversion entirely in physical terms ; thus only can Eliot establish the continuity of the character. Second, it is a typically Eliotic device of introducing the Christ-pattern through the back-door.

The pattern is throughout pivotal in Eliot and worked out most fully and explicitly in *The Cocktail Party*, where Celia is shown as being reborn in spirit through her physical death.

What is true of the 'cannibal isle' is also true of the 'crocodile isle' ; both are swathed in layers of ambiguity. The two isles, we have suggested,

are not the same ; and yet they are the same isle, the difference being a product of varying points of view. Doris may not have heard of Rousseau's 'noble savage', yet in *Sweeney Agonistes* the humanist is given pretty long hearing. The first two songs are parodies of Rousseauistic idylls ; and because Sweeney knows what this brand of humanism ultimately amounts to, it is with a deliberate intention that he shuffles h's terminology. In the fable the crocodile is supposed to weep over the bitter necessity of having to kill animals for food ; and the humanist sheds tears over the vanishing of a supposedly golden age. Sweeney seizes this opportunity to set the humanist's record straight : a 'crocodile isle' minus crocodile tears equals a 'cannibal isle.' Theoretically it looks a simple equation, though in life it is difficult to get it quite right,—one of the tragic necessities of life being that one has to discover the truth for oneself. The 'crocodile isle' is the humanist's paradise, but Doris does not like it :

That's not life, that's no life  
Why I'd just as soon be dead.

Doris's reaction is unreasonable, for the 'crocodile isle' is the archetype of her 'egg-shell flat where she manages to thrive pretty well by taking a few short-term precautions. Indeed, what she seems really to resent is being awakened to naked truth, the metaphysics of her existence. It is interesting to remember a title under which, some two years earlier, Eliot published three of his poems : *Doris's Dream Songs*' (1924). Doris wants the dream to continue.

But Sweeney is awakened. Like Harry, he is the bird 'sent flying through the Purgatorial fire,' and calling out to unawakened ones. He brings us news that 'life is death' : and more anecdotally, that he 'knew a man once did a girl in.'

Eliot had written in 1917 :

In Gopsum street a man murders his mistress. The important fact is that for the man the act is eternal, and that for the brief space he has to live, he is already dead. He is already in a different world from ours. He has crossed the frontier.<sup>2A</sup>

As we have said earlier, it is impossible to be certain whether or not Sweeney himself is the murderer ; he might understandably introduce 'the murder-story to provide 'objective correlative' for his emotion. But what there need be no doubt about is that Sweeney too has crossed the frontier. True, certainly, that murder is a definitive act that commits one to a state, that Raskolnikov, Macbeth and Dr. Hawley Harvey

Crippen have all taken this decisive step, snapped the gossamer, and confirmed thereby the hell in themselves. And Harry, though he cannot be said to be a proven murderer, is haunted by the idea that he did push his wife overboard and kill her. But what of Celia? Her "awareness of solitude" and "sense of sin" make her a co-sufferer, though there is no antecedent crime to cause them: they are the outcome of her disillusionment with life.

.. then I found we were only strangers  
 And that there had been neither giving nor taking  
 But that we had merely made use of each other  
 Each for his purpose. That's horrible. Can we only love  
 Something created by our own imagination?  
 Are we all in fact unloving and unlovable?  
 Then one *is* alone, and if one is alone  
 The lover and beloved are equally unreal  
 And the dreamer is no more real than his dreams."<sup>6</sup>

Sweeney is plunged into this essential aloneness. All avenues of communication fail; the well-worn practical categories whereby life's little business is transacted are meaningless.

When you're alone like he was alone  
 You're either and neither  
 I tell you again it don't apply  
 Death or life or life or death...

The syntax breaks, the contradictions no longer matter. His interlocutors want him to continue his story, but he has no 'story' to tell, and no patience with, no respect for tidy linguistic structures. He does not care 'if you understand or if you don't' / 'That's nothing to me and nothing to you'. Indeed, one may be hard put to it to discover the *context* of such gnomic utterances. But their relevance is clear: after such knowledge one cannot explain one's nightmares away; nor exorcise the stubborn, blood-curdling ghosts by consulting a text-book of psychology. If in a dream one is 'hit on the head', the hurt is real,—it survives the dream. The knocking is real too, so are the nightmares:

And you wait for a knock and a turning of a lock  
 for you know the hangman's waiting for you.

The skull has cracked as irreparably as the Lady of Shalott's mirror, and through the gaping wound the 'hoo-has' come ceaselessly pouring into the head.

It is almost impossible to foresee how this 'Aristophanic melodrama' could have ended. Eliot's own postscript, which he supplied to Hallie Flanagan for the Vassar production (1933) is both sketchy and abrupt. Besides, it is written in an altogether different verse style,—perhaps only a back-handed admission that he did not know how to finish it all, dramatically. Still this curious catechism between Sweeney and Father Time, disguised as an Old Gentleman, has interesting undertones.

Sweeney : When will the barnfowl fly before morning ?  
 When will the owl be operated on for cataracts ?  
 When will the eagle get out of his barrel-roll ?

Old Gentleman : When the camel is too tired to walk farther  
 Then shall the pigeon-pie blossom in the desert  
 At the wedding-breakfast of life and death.

The questions are as cryptic as the answer. But to readers familiar with Eliot's post-conversion poetry and religious symbolism, this colloquy will not seem impenetrable. Sweeney is asking questions, through not quite unfamiliar metaphors, related to a possible regeneration ; and Time in answering him, again, metaphorically, makes use of images whose likenesses we encounter in, say, 'Journey of the Magi' and *Ash Wednesday*. Of special importance, however, is the last line : 'At the wedding-breakfast of life and death.' An Attic Comedy, Conford says, ends with the 'marriage' of the Year-God with the Earth-Goddess, thus binding in reconciliation the opposed principles that clash in the Agon, viz., good and evil, Summer and Winter, Death and Life.

But the ritual marriage, as envisaged by Eliot, may have an even greater dimension. In his letter to Hallie Flanagan, Eliot furnished some important tips regarding production :

The action should be stylized as in the Noh drama... Characters ought to wear masks ; ...I had intended the whole play to be accompanied by light drum-taps to accentuate the beats. The characters should be in a shabby flat, seated at a refectory table, facing the audience ; Sweeney in the middle with a chafing dish, scrambling eggs. (See 'you see this egg').<sup>27</sup>

Taking this hint up Grover Smith judiciously suggests that among Aristophanic character-types Sweeney probably corresponds to the 'Learned Cook' "who inherits the role of life-giver from fertility ritual ;"<sup>28</sup>

he also notes in this respect a similarity of function between Sweeney and Alex, a 'guardian' in *The Cocktail Party*. However, there is no reason why one should stop even there : the eggs can stand deeper explorations into them. One finds the Chorus in Aristophane's *Birds* glorifying their ancestry thus :

This is what happened : out of the sable-feathered darkness  
And whirlwind, was formed an egg : out of the egg the seasons  
Broke to their stable singings : so did unstable Eros—  
The dazzling golden enchanter, the world-winged glittering  
whirlwind.<sup>22</sup>

After a long period of incubation, the halves of this primeval egg separated out from each other forming the Heaven and the Earth, which, from the moment they were created, were vowed to perpetual antagonism. But paradoxically this division is not final, for with them was also born Eros, the bird of golden plumage, whose task was to bring the halves together in a cosmic reunion. F. M. Cornford in his *From Religion to Philosophy* (1912) refers to this myth while discussing the Heraclitean doctrine of the reconciliation of opposites :

The two contraries are antagonistic, at perpetual war with each other. It is a war of mutual aggression—each seeking to invade the province of the other. But this invasion involves a mixing of two elements—a reconciliation, or marriage, in which both combine to produce a compound, the individual thing. Earth and Heaven are essentially the female and male principles in Greek cosmology. In the 'gap' between their sundered forms appears the winged figure of the cosmic Eros, whose function is to reunite them.<sup>23</sup>

What do all these mythological elements amount to when we see them, as Eliot certainly did, from the standpoint of the 'negative mysticism' of St. John of the Cross? The answer may be found in 'Fast Coker' :

In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession.

This is the explanation of Sweeney's emphasis (and a very crude emphasis it apparently looks like) on doing a girl in.<sup>24</sup> He must murder to create, must break the shell of the make-believe world to effect a reconstruction on a new plane. One can thus discover the hidden connection between Doris's dream of weddings and her premonition of death. In Sweeney's case this insight into the lives of others and the world around him is complemented by a new and unique self-knowledge.

"...I am convinced," Eliot wrote in 1929, "that if this 'supernatural' is suppressed ..., the *dualism* of man and nature collapses at once."<sup>22</sup> Sweeney too comes to perceive that the sundered halves of his nature may be integrated only in the presence of a transcendent principle. He approaches very near indeed to the view point of the Clergyman.

And this brings us to the conceptual aspect of Sweeney, to the idea he embodies. He incarnates, for Eliot, the 'backward half-look/Over the the shoulder, towards the primitive terror' ('Dry Salvages'). Of course, the word 'primitive' does not here imply any temporal-spatial distance. To meet the 'primitive' one need neither traverse the long, narrowing vistas of history, nor haunt those obscure preserves where he is supposed to survive on the outskirts of scientific civilization; all one needs to do is to look down into oneself. He is no anachronism, far less a specimen for a zoo or museum, but a living reality: "Human nature does not change." But this is a fact about human nature that humanists in general seem incapable of grasping; they are as a rule incurable sentimentalists. To see the end he foresees for man in harmony with the beginning, the humanist makes use of the prelapsarian myth, but always with a difference: he locates the Garden not, as in *Genesis*, beyond time but within it. Sweeney's summing up of life on the 'crocodile isle' shows clearly enough that it is at best a paradise for animals, where good and evil have not entered and where, consequently, the question of moral choice is an irrelevance. The humanist's extreme solicitude for man is self-defeating; it falsifies man's nature, indeed reduces man to a sub-human level and thereby restricts his destiny. The significance of Sweeney's role as 'agonistes' lies precisely here. By proposing the 'cannibal isle' as the one indubitable reality, he smashes the glass-house paradise of Doris and Dusty; and this destruction of false innocence is the necessary first step to the transcendence of experience. "What is important," observed T. E. Hulme, "is what nobody seems to realize—the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the categories of religious attitude. That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection."<sup>23</sup> In *Sweeney Agonistes* Eliot establishes the same conclusions in a concrete way.

Sweeney then has come in his own way to testify to the truth of the dogmas the Reverend time and again solemnly pronounced. But is that in itself enough to effect an identification? Or, to put the question in a more straightforward way, was Eliot converted to Anglo-Catholicism



solely on the strength of what these 'primitive' feelings taught him about himself?<sup>24</sup> As answering this question would mean treading deep into the danger-ridden forest of psychology and theology, where we have every chance of losing our way, we beg permission to invoke the authority of Eliot himself :

"The struggle to recover the sense of relation to nature and to God, the recognition that even the most primitive feelings should be part of our heritage, seems to me to be the explanation and justification of the life of D. H. Lawrence, and excuse for his aberrations. But we need not only to learn how to look at the world with the eyes of a Mexican Indian—and I hardly think that Lawrence succeeded—and we certainly cannot afford to stop there. We need to know how to see the world as the Christian Fathers saw it ; and the purpose of reascending to origins is that we should be able to return, with greater spiritual knowledge, to our own situation. We need to recover the sense of religious fear, so that it may be overcome by religious hope."<sup>25</sup>

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2. " 'Miss Buttle' and 'Mr. Eliot'." *The Bit Between My Teeth : A Literary Chronicle of 1950—1965* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, Second Printing, 1966), pp. 387-88.
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25. Quoted in Hugh Kenner's *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot*, p. 197.  
cf. *The Family Reunion*:

Harry:     Your ordinary murderer  
               Regards himself as an innocent victim.  
               To himself he is still what he used to be  
               Or what he would be. He cannot realize  
               That everything is irrevocable,  
               The past unredeemable.

(*Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 315)

26. *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 416.
27. Quoted in H. Flanagan, *Dynamo* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), pp. 82-83; also Carol H. Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice*, pp. 62-63.

28. Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Source and Meaning* (Phoenix Books, The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 113.
29. Aristophanes, *Birds*, translated by Patric Dickinson, *Aristophanes: Plays* (Oxford University Press, Paperback, 1970) vol. 2, p. 34.
30. F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in The Origins of Western Speculation* (Harper Torchbooks, 1957) p. 70.
31. The only alternative to this explanation is to accept Sweeney's words at their face value, which is not much. Cf. Herbert Howarth: "It was to Eliot's taste to attempt the drama of 'a late murder'.... *Sweeney Agonistes* is the drama of the man who has committed the crime every man wants to commit once in his life." *Notes on Some figures Behind T. S. Eliot* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1965) p. 312.
32. T. S. Eliot, 'Second Thoughts About Humanism' (1929), *Selected Essays*, p. 485.
33. Quoted in Eliot's 'Second Thoughts About Humanism' (1929), *Selected Essays*, p. 491.
34. Edmund Wilson answers the question in the affirmative: "It is, I believe, the recalcitrance of the rascal that has convinced him of the reality of Original Sin." "'Miss Buttle' and 'Mr. Eliot'", *The Blt Between My Teeth*, p. 388.
35. T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, p. 62.

## A CONTROVERSIAL PASSAGE IN FOUR QUARTETS

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H. P. MOHANTY

THE passage in question is the fourth Section of *East Coker*. Earlier critics like Curtis Bradford called it the finest section of the poem. Helen Gardner attributed to it the qualities of an early Passion hymn.<sup>1</sup> But with Northrop Frye the passage fell into heavy weather. He complained of the 'bleak hospital imagery, the pedantic allegory, the concentration on Good Friday, and the harsh whether-you-like-it-or-not dogmatism of the passage.'<sup>2</sup> Donald Davie, C. K. Stead, Denis Donoghue followed suit with more devastating criticism. The conceit of the poem appears to Davie to be 'the much-elaborated, skull-and-crossbones conceit,' 'strained and elaborated'; 'the strain and labouring are deliberate, a conscious forcing of the tone, a conscious movement towards self-parody.'<sup>3</sup> The operation of the creative faculty in this section is dubbed as 'meddling intellect' by C. K. Stead, 'the conscious working up into verse, through a series of intellectual analogies and paradoxes, of a metaphysical idea. The result is a piece of ingenuity, a synthetic poem, quite without feeling or life.'<sup>4</sup> His final verdict on the section is that it not merely fails to be good poetry but succeeds in being 'thoroughly bad.'<sup>5</sup> Donoghue has a similar caustic comment to make; "the tone is strangely crude; indeed this is one of the weaker parts of the poem. The analogies of health and disease, surgeons, patients and hospitals are marginally appropriate, and far too dependent upon our reading 'the wounded surgeon' as Christ, 'the dying nurse' as Church, the hospital as the earth, the briars as the thorns of Christ."<sup>6</sup> And Bernard Bergonzi maintains that the passage will hardly recover from the adverse comments directed on it.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to see by textual analysis if such a recovery can be obtained for this passage.

The 'wounded surgeon' in the opening line is of course Christ. The 'steel' is the curative surgery of Christ. The surgeon himself is wounded, that is, crucified atoning for the sins of mankind. 'Distempered part' means 'distempered soul.' 'Bleeding hands' in the third line may mean

the hand that bleeds in itself and the hand that bleeds the patient, bleeding in ancient medicine being a much-practised cure. The 'sharp compassion' is an astonishingly compact phrase, meaning quickness, acuteness, pain and at the same time tenderness, gentleness, mercy. Christ, as it were, strikes one into the agony of illuminating, elevating self-transformation. It is only this kind of surgery that can 'resolve the enigma of the fever chart.' 'Fever chart' may mean the inexplicable disorder of the human soul as well as of human history. An individual is a complex of self, race, heredity, history. And the spiritual history, the spiritual chart of each individual is a complex of all these which has upward, downward, see-saw, criss-cross movement. This tormenting spiritual condition of man, particularly the modern man, is the engima which can only be resolved by the 'wounded surgeon's bleeding hand.' In three concentrated lines Eliot is creating the modern idiom for the struggle, the torture of man's spiritual crisis and the redemptive Grace of Christ that can alleviate this crisis.

The concentration is all along there, in the rest of this section IV of *East Coker*. The startling paradox in the very first line of the second stanza is not absurd. Disease is intrinsically something disturbing, dis-ease. All diseases are deviations from normalcy. But without this dis-ease or disease spiritual health is well-nigh impossible. The rest of the stanza is easy; only the implication of 'dying nurse' is poignant. For, the nurse, that is, the Church is dying, thanks to a heady materialistic 'milieu.' Still the church is our mentor, our critic that constantly reminds us of 'Adam's curse,' and, by implication, the need for alertness, for constant self-scrutiny which does nothing 'to please,' to foster complacency and self-cheering. The paradox of the last line of this stanza—'to be restored, our sickness must grow worse'—only augments the necessity of intense and more intense suffering. Only by such acute agony can one hope to be 'restored'—to be cured in oneself and to be reconciled with the Divine.

The hospital-surgeon-patient conceit in these stanzas is not entirely Eliot's own. Lancelot Andrewes uses the metaphor of the 'physician'<sup>8</sup>. Eliot changes this metaphor to surgeon and thereby obtains added significance. The 'surgeon' metaphor is a compact of the 'Physician' of Andrewes and 'the flaming dart imagery of mystical experience' employed by St. John of the Cross in *The Living Flame of Love*.<sup>9</sup>

In proper tune with the conceit the next stanza compares 'the whole earth' to a hospital. 'Ruined millionaire' is of course Adam who founded or endowed the earth. Again, the paradox of 'endowing' and 'ruined

millionaire' is not to go unnoticed. Adam the prime parent endowed, peopled the earth though spiritually he was ruined by asking for a mate. 'It was beyond a mortal's share to wander solitary' in 'that happy garden-state' where 'two Paradises it were in one to live in Paradise alone.'<sup>10</sup> The behaviour of man in this 'endowed hospital' is given in the next three lines which admit of ambiguous and ambivalent meanings: one, if we do well, that is prosper in the worldly sense, we shall of course die of Adam's tyrannous bequest of sin, the longings of the flesh, a death bleak and unfraught with spiritual possibilities. In fact, the original sin that Adam committed is obstinate and would subtly hinder and harass us out of divinity. The second meaning is precisely opposite to this: 'die' may mean dying into spiritual health. And one can 'do well' in this sense (*a la* Langland) by heeding Christ. In this sense the subsequent lines mean 'the absolute Grace of God or Christ—absolute paternal care'—that would cling to us in spite of all our distractions and denials (cf. *The Hound of Heaven*) and prevent us from the spiritually insolvent fate of Adam, the Fall.

The imagery in this passage is nothing arbitrarily new. Sir Thomas Browne uses the same imagery in *Religio Medici*: 'For this world I count it not an Inn but an Hospital, a place not to live, but to die in.' Lancelot Andrewes also compares the earth to a hospital. What is new is the integration of old imagery into Eliot's modern experience, thus creating a highly-charged modern idiom. Eliot is not transmitting just the old experience. *Four Quartets* is nothing if not Eliot's and the modern man's search for faith and substantial advance in acquisition of faith. Eliot said in 1930: 'one of the happy necessities of human experience is that we have to find things out for ourselves.'<sup>11</sup>

The next stanza is a progression of this experience. The 'chill' and 'the fever' in the first two lines, though paradoxical, symbolise the initial stages of spiritual experience. One's first response to the Divine is chilling in itself, a kind of frozen, stupefied recognition of one's spiritual potency, it is also chilling towards mundane experiences. So is the fever, the fever that is the tension of this transition of being from one state to another. Again this is not a wholly original idea of Eliot. Pascal had the same feeling prior to Eliot.<sup>12</sup> Chill and fever, in short, are symbols of purgation and death. The purgation idea is developed in the next lines. 'If to be warmed, then I must freeze/And quake in frigid purgatorial fires/Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.' The gripping paradox of the lines points to an innate poise of ambivalent responses that characterises the whole of *Four Quartets*. The associations

in the last two lines remind one of Dante. Purgatorial fire has two ends—flame and smoke. The flame is roses. Rose in Dante is the symbol of love, grace, divine illumination. Smoke is the symbol of pain, torment, cloud and confusion; thus it is like briars. And these are to be subjugated to reach to 'death's other Kingdom.'<sup>13</sup> By using 'frigid' as epithet to 'purgatorial fires' Eliot is lending new meaning to 'frigid', extending its dimension; 'frigid' becomes insulated, insulation implying cold purity. The reminiscence of 'the dance along the artery/The circulation of the lymph/Are figured in the drift of stars/Ascend to summer in the tree' in *Burnt Norton* II increases the poetic valency and musicality of this passage by providing parallel and contrast.

The poetry of these three lines is superb. The stressed words 'freeze,' 'frigid,' 'fires,' 'flame' constitute a fine chain of alliteration starting from 'from' in the first line. Indeed the musicality of the section is throughout consistent. The rhythm is fluent. No constriction, no strain in the rhythm. neither is it mellifluous. The reading is not clogged by clumsiness and difficulty in the rhythm.

The final stanza is also loaded with ambiguity. This stanza, to quote Donne, might speak of itself thus: 'oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one.'<sup>14</sup> And this stanza admits of contrary interpretations. At one level it would mean: we are so sensual that the 'dripping blood' (butchering) and 'bloody flesh' literally are our food. And in spite of this sensuality we call ourselves sound, substantial in flesh and blood. And in spite of this we call the day of Christ's crucifixion good. We killed Christ on Friday and chuckle to call this Good Friday. At the contrary level it would mean: Christ, symbolised in dripping blood and bloody flesh, is our only spiritual food. Contemplation of Christ and his life and deed can only redeem us. Friday, in this sense, is supposed to be good because it is the anniversary of Christ's atonement for the sins of mankind. We are not really sound, substantial in flesh and blood. Only Christ was one such. Our bodies, as contrasted to Christ's, are actually not sound.

The whole section is thus an elaborate conceit done in the manner of English metaphysical poets. It is one of the two major modes of image-formation in English metaphysical poetry. The conceit however, is not in the English metaphysical mode because it lacks the definitive quality of ratiocination noticed in metaphysical poetry, particularly that of Donne. The poem is the *statement* of initial spiritual condition, but only statement, not logical ratiocination. Even *Four Quartets*, for that matter, is no ratiocination, though in theme it is more

metaphysical than English metaphysical poetry. But the statement here is an intensely *felt* statement, not the spurt of rhetoric.

*Four Quartets* is Eliot's *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Indeed the whole of Eliot's poetry beginning with *Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and ending with *Little Gidding* is Eliot's *Divine Comedy*, his Odyssey of spiritual evolution without the complete fulfilment of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. And this section in *East Coker* is a crucial stage in that evolution. Thus it has a dual value—value in itself as poetry, a complete poetic entity and value as part of a complete consort. It is not staggeringly and uncouthly new. Eliot's own experience blends the reminiscences of different sources into a distinctively individual poetic harmony, the sort of thing Donne does in *The Ecstasy*. All the major images in Donne's poem are unoriginal, but the entire experience of the poem is Donne's own. The obvious touch of pedantry and dogmatism—Eliot by this time was an avowed Anglo-Catholic—is no bar to appreciation or understanding of the poem. The doctrinal content is no bane to appreciation. Leavis calls this a traditional and religious poem.<sup>15</sup> In fact it is an excellent demonstration of Eliot's famous theory of tradition and individual talent. Tradition inheres in the theme—original sin, grace, Redemption, Atonement—and in the imagery; individual talent inheres in the amount of suffered emotion or contemplation that is put into it. Eliot's suffering is representative, not merely here, but in the entire *Four Quartets*, representative of all sensitive souls' journey through an unhinged world. The suffered emotion or contemplation is expressed through ambivalence, contraries, conceits, paradoxes, ambiguities, symbols. The great danger in handling these technical tools of poetry, that is, making irresponsible and indiscriminate use of these in an uneven *moré*, is obviated by the profundity of Eliot's experience and his virtuoso handling of idiom. In short, this section is Eliot's competent modern idiom for the criss-cross of soul in the initial responses to the Divine in an irreligious *milieu*.

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## THE CLASSICAL ANALOGUE IN THE PLAYS OF T. S. ELIOT

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KRISHNA GHOSE

AN analysis of the function of classical analogues in Eliot's drama (with the exception of *Murder in the Cathedral*) is not, as has sometimes been suggested, a futile exercise in source hunting and forced comparisons. Quite apart from our knowledge of his affirmation of tradition and affiliation in literature to classical values, which he identified with the Classics, the fact remains that the classical correspondences in the plays were acknowledged by Eliot himself. Besides, with respect to the theatre, Eliot was very early convinced of the need for some form of ritual to deepen and amplify the kind of dramatic statement possible within the prevalent naturalistic conventions. Discussing the stylized technique of Leonid Massine in a 1920 theatre review, Eliot wrote :

The realism of the ordinary stage is something to which we can no longer respond...We know now that the gesture of daily existence is inadequate for the stage...For the stage, not only in its remote origins, but always, is a ritual and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art...<sup>1</sup>

Eliot's ambition to bring to the theatre a spiritual, and even specifically religious, dimension which it seemed to him to lack, is entirely consistent with this opinion. So was his endeavour to restore poetic drama ; poetry is not only a more heightened and metaphorical form of expression than prose, but is associated with the ritual origin of drama.

That Eliot still chose, somewhat paradoxically, to portray in most of his plays "the gesture of daily existence," had to do with his awareness of the limitations of the average audience—"one test of a good religious play is that it should be able to hold the attention...of people who are not religious as well as of those who are".<sup>2</sup>

Eliot's literary criticism of the twenties and thirties demonstrates his search for a dramatic form that would unite complex and symbolic statement with the capacity to entertain in terms of conventional

expectation—in other words, a form capable of multiple levels of signification. As the unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes* testifies, the music-hall format which had initially attracted Eliot, proved intractable to an extended exploration of the life of the spirit. His reasons for not continuing to write historical plays despite the success of *MC* (1935) are outlined at length in “Poetry and Drama”; in a 1959 interview, the matter was put succinctly—“*MC* is a period piece and something out of the ordinary... It didn’t solve any problems I was interested in.”<sup>3</sup> In a talk broadcast in 1936 (three years before *the Family Reunion*), other possibilities are considered—

If we wrote in the dramatic form and the versification of Shakespeare, we should only succeed in making rather poor imitations of Shakespeare...Hence we have to make use of suggestions from more remote drama, too remote for there to be any danger of imitation, such as “Everyman” and the late medieval morality and mystery plays and the great Greek dramatists.<sup>4</sup>

Eliot’s eventual turning to classical drama for inspiration, rather than to the morality play with its simple oppositions of good and evil, had to do with his particular reading of classical drama, as influenced by the Cambridge School of Classical Anthropologists.

Eliot’s indebtedness to Frazer (whose *The Golden Bough* “has influenced our generation profoundly”) is on record in the Notes on *The Waste Land*. The association, by the Cambridge School, of classical drama with religious rites in ancient Greece, was especially congenial to Eliot with his concern to renew ritual on the modern stage. It was Eliot’s opinion that the work of Jane Harrison, Cornford and Cook, in which “they burrow in the origins of Greek myths and rites” has “sensibly affected our attitude towards the Classics.”<sup>5</sup> Classical drama dealt almost solely with incidents from Greek mythology, and mythology, according to the Cambridge School, embodied archetypal responses capable of being universally understood. A modern action patterned on a classical analogue could, in this view, draw upon all the rich emotional potential of that analogue—its ties with religion and ritual and poetry; its portrayal of fundamental human situations relevant to all times and all places. As these were precisely the qualities that Eliot sought to reestablish in the theatre, the classical analogue seemed to be the most useful paradigm of the kind of drama he wished to create.

For Eliot, art, to be meaningful, needed to have “elected for Christ.”<sup>6</sup> As it happened, however, he found no essential incompatibility between a

Christian drama and classical models embodying an alien theology. Eliot considered Classicism and Christianity to stand in a vital relationship to each other as the forces shaping Western culture.<sup>7</sup> Both Christianity and Classicism were, for Eliot, distinguished by their insistence on norms transcending the purely personal: in "The Function of Criticism," he approvingly quotes Middleton Murry's dictum that "Catholicism stands for the principle of unquestioned spiritual authority outside the individual; that is also the principle of Classicism in literature."<sup>8</sup> Finally, Eliot felt that the ritual orientation of Greek drama made it a congenial source of inspiration for a religious, Christian theatre—"The greatest tragedies are occupied with great and parmanent moral conflicts: the great tragedies of Aeschylus, of Sophocles, of Corneille, of Racine, of Shakespeare, have the same burden."<sup>9</sup>

The juxtaposition of Greek parallels (with their highly conventional form and heroic content) and the Wilde-Coward variety of comedy of manners that Eliot apparently considered suitable for West End audiences may seem, at first, to be incongruous. Eliot's choice of certain classical plays for reinterpretation rather than others indicates quite clearly the way in which he tried to resolve this dichotomy on the formal level. The plays he adapts—the *Oresteia*, the *Ion*, the *Alcestis* and *Oedipus at Colonus*—are concerned intrinsically with regeneration or rebirth of some sort, through recognition of certain spiritual values or of certain truths which had hitherto been misapprehended: the comedy of manners, with its marital muddles and mistaken identities, also culminates in recognition of the truth, and the consequent establishment of more harmonious relationships. As regards characterisation, one might argue that it is difficult to visualize even diminished versions of Agamemnon or Oedipus as "furnished flat sort of people."<sup>10</sup> Eliot, however, was interested in generalized structures or patterns of experience rather than in the heroic figures who enacted them. Thus the expected antinomy between ancient grandeur and contemporary pettiness does not (except in *Sweeney*) operate at all in the plays. Harry in *FR* is not, in any literal sense, a manifestation of Orestes. His spiritual quest is at once similar to, and different from, that of Orestes—and both the similarities and the differences illuminate the nature of Harry's awareness. The way in which the classical frames or underpatterns shape and complement and throw into relief central elements in the modern actions is, consequently, crucial to an understanding of Eliot's plays.

Eliot's first experiment in the dramatic form was *Sweeney Agonistes*, subtitled "Fragments of an Aristophanic melodrama." "Apeneck Sweeney"

had featured in a number of the early short poems, where he symbolised the coarse and sordid nature of commonplace existence. Whether or not a connection is intended between the Sweeney and Doris of the dramatic fragments, and characters with similar names in the early poems, there is the same ironic juxtaposition of the classical and the contemporary. In *Sweeney Erect*, the gross, animal image of Sweeney cuts across the glory of Homeric allusions with jarring incongruity—

Morning stirs the feet and hands  
(Nausicaa and Polypheme)  
Gesture of orang-outang  
Rises from the sheets in steam.<sup>11</sup>

In *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*, historical continuity masks a profound spiritual dissimilarity, but the total effect goes beyond the simple contrasts of *Sweeney Erect*. Antique heroism exposes, by comparison, the squalor of modern life, but is itself shown up in its true colours: murder and treachery are contemptible in whatever context they may occur—

The host with someone indistinct  
Converses at the door apart,  
The nightingales are singing near  
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,  
  
And sang within the bloody wood  
When Agamemnon cried aloud,  
And let their liquid siftings fall  
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

The Sweeney of *Sweeney Agonistes* functions within a more complex set of relations. The implied parallel, in the title, with Milton's *Samson Agonistes* as much as with the protagonist or "agonistes" of Greek tragedy, as well as the co-existence of epigraphs from the *Choephoroe* and St. John of the Cross, all point to the superimposition of the Christian tradition on the Greek. A similar juxtaposition seems to have been intended, on the evidence of the sub-title, between an ancient and a modern form—the bawdy, farcical, topical Old Comedy of Aristophanes and the music-hall routine. *Sweeney* is thus an attempt to write a play that operates on more levels than one. Though set off, to his disadvantage, against the heroic protagonists of classical tragedy, Sweeney is himself contrasted with the other characters who are of more limited insight than himself. And the "bounce" and "patter" and "feed-back" of music-hall conventions, with their roots in popular speech-rhythms and traditional comedy routines suggest, in some way, the conventions of the ancient "Komos".

Eliot himself, in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, referred to his deliberate employment of levels of awareness in *Sweeney* which, in their turn, were to correspond to levels of comprehension in the audience. The experiment was complicated and proved, at this stage of Eliot's dramatic development, difficult to sustain. (A workable synthesis of this order was not to be achieved till *The Cocktail Party*.) It is interesting, however, that in spite of being a fragment, *Sweeney* in many ways anticipates the later plays.

Carol H. Smith has enumerated some of the likenesses—"a chorus .. colloquial speech conventions from the Greek ritual drama and Greek sources for plot situations, and the development of integrated levels of meaning..."<sup>12</sup> There are also resemblances in detail with *F.R.* and *C.P.* Sweeney's morbid obsession with murder and his fear of the "hoo-ha's" look forward to the pursuit of Harry by the Eumenides. Celia's martyrdom is predicted in Sweeney's threatening to carry Doris off to "a cannibal isle", there to "convert" her into a "nice little, white little, missionary stew". Again, as a letter of Eliot's to Hallie Flanagan on a stage performance of *Sweeney* indicates, Sweeney "with a chafing dish, scrambling eggs"<sup>13</sup> foreshadows the role of Alex in *C.P.* as the proto-comic "Learned Cook" of Aristophanic comedy—a figure associated traditionally with ancient fertility rituals and rebirth.

Moreover, the disorientation and the vacuity of life that Sweeney experiences are very like the initial responses of Harry and Celia and Colby, and for much the same kind of reason. Unlike Krumpacker and Klipstein, but like the man in the anecdote who committed a murder and cut himself off from divine grace (and who functions as a 'persona' of Sweeney), Sweeney suffers from feelings of delusion and unreality—

He didn't know if he was alive  
And the girl was dead  
He didn't know if the girl was alive  
And he was dead  
He didn't know if they were both alive  
Or both were dead...

And there is the intense conviction, very like Harry's and Celia's, that this sense of separation from grace and goodness cannot be communicated to those who have not had the same vision—

I gotta use words when I talk to you  
But if you understand and if you don't  
That's nothing to me and nothing to you.

But this is where the correspondences stop. Many of the elements in *Sweeney* are reworked in greater detail in the later plays, but Eliot, for obvious reasons, no longer continued to write in this mode. *Sweeney*, as it stands, presents an experience of alienation rather than of reconciliation. The moral solution implied in the epigraph from St John of the Cross is not realized in this fragment. The vicious human circle of "birth and copulation and death" is not transcended: the throbbing, syncopated, jazz rhythms in the dialogue actually link *Sweeney's* restlessness to that of his age.

It has been remarked that, had Eliot continued to write in the manner of *Sweeney*, he might have anticipated Beckett and Pinter.<sup>14</sup> One might not agree with this judgement, but it does point to the presence of elements in *Sweeney* which are far removed from Eliot's later drama of reconciliation and Christian salvation.

Eliot's manipulation of the Classical reminiscences in *Sweeney* also differs from his practice in the later plays. *Sweeney's* "cream of a nightmare dream," when "you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock for you know the hangman's waiting for you," is intended to gain in depth by being a retelling of the Orestes story. But the shabby world of Wauchope and Horsfall and Swarts and Snow is also the world of *Sweeney* (though there is some effort to set him apart from it through his vision of the "hoo-ha's") and this contrast with the world of Orestes is surely ironic. In the later plays the classical analogues, for the most part, augment and complement, rather than oppose, the modern action. *Sweeney* is, however, not merely a striking experiment; but a significant introduction, as well, to Eliot's drama: it reveals the potential lines of development that Eliot did not follow quite as much as those that he did.

The Choruses from *The Rock* (1934), and *MC*, differ from Eliot's subsequent practice in the theatre in being overtly religious and unrelated to Greek drama. This difference had to do with the special circumstances of their production, on the occasion of festivals of the Church. *The Rock*, however, though only a pageant, contains motifs and ideas which recur in the later plays. It shows the spiritual aridity of life lived in "ignorance of the Word"—

The desert is not remote in southern tropics,  
The desert is not only around the corner,  
The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,  
The desert is in the heart of your brother.<sup>15</sup>

(The imagery anticipates the experience of alienation from God as "the sudden solitude in a crowded desert" in *FR*.) The morally blind are admonished in lines applicable to the Unidentified Guest in *CP*—

O my soul, be prepared for the coming of the stranger,  
Be prepared for him who knows how to ask questions.

The piece ends with a celebration of the sacrifice of the elect who, through their faith and renunciation, redeem fallen humanity—

And the Son of Man was not crucified once for all,  
The blood of the martyrs not shed once for all,  
The lives of the Saints not given once for all :  
But the Son of Man is crucified always  
And there shall be Martyrs and Saints.

This, too, is a constant theme of the later plays, and most notably of *CP*.

*MC* continues the Christian and theological concerns of *The Rock* ; yet, the play is more Greek in spirit than those consciously using classical analogues. Louis Martz has identified points of contact between *MC* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, concluding that the "precedent" explains the presence of "Greek-like fatalism...in Eliot's Christian play."<sup>16</sup> David Ward posits a deeper correlation with one of the historical bases of Greek drama by indicating the "aetiological" nature of *MC*—"...it does commemorate the historical origin of the shrine of St. Thomas..." The play is also found to contain "implicit reference throughout...to the symbolism of vegetation ritual," in accordance with the prototypical elements of Greek tragedy, as enumerated in Gilbert Murray's "Excursus" in Jane Harrison's *Themis*. The conflation of Christian martyrdom with pagan myths involving the death of heroes is explained in terms of anthropological theories (to which Eliot subscribed), which equated the passion of Christ with the passion of the dying fertility god, Dionysus, whose death and resurrection were reflected, in turn, in the careers of semi-divine heroes like Oedipus and Heracles.<sup>17</sup>

It is most notably in the relationship between chorus and protagonist that *MC* approaches Greek tragedy. The doxology of the final chorus equates faith in Thomas the Martyr with faith in the Lord—the struggle and suffering and the triumph of the protagonist are its own agony, pathos and theophany. Unlike that of *FR*, the chorus here is closer to the Greek, too, in its dual character : it is hieratic and fallible by turns, moving easily between the two planes.



Quite apart from the classical reminiscences, *MC* anticipates basic ideas in the latter plays, with the one major distinction that Thomas is already aware of his destiny as one dedicated to God, whereas Harry and Celia and Colby need painfully to search it out. Despite this knowledge, Thomas has also to go through the arduous process of self-realization. At the beginning he is swayed by pride (an echo of the Greek 'hubris'), and comes to realize this only after confrontations with the Tempters. *MC* also illustrates Eliot's conviction regarding the presence of a spiritual hierarchy among men, depending on varying potentialities for religious awareness. The poor women of Canterbury validate Thomas' martyrdom by bearing witness to it; they have not the moral capacity to be martyrs themselves. Thus, despite its candidly doctrinal bearing, *MC* approaches central ideas in the latter plays through its concern with spiritual recognition as the prelude to redemption, as well as with the existence of degrees of spiritual awareness.

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## SOCIALIST CRITICISM OF GALSWORTHY

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ANIMA BISWAS

D. H. Lawrence in his attack on Galsworthy in *Scrutinies* (1928) alleges, inter alia, that Galsworthy is a bourgeois to the core<sup>1</sup>. Lawrence thinks that Galsworthy's attempted exposure of the vulgar property-instincts of the Forsytes (in *The Man of Property*) has not been carried to its logical extreme, and instead he himself surrenders to the Forsyte values. Lawrence, however, does not spell out his premises in so many words; he only refers to Irene's and Bosinney's bourgeois aspirations and the mellowing down of the critical tone towards Soames; he also characterizes Megan's tragic love for Ashurst (in the story "The Apple Tree") in terms of class-instincts. Sociological critics—Christopher Caudwell and Arnold Kettle in particular—take their cue from Lawrence, and try to show that Galsworthy does not probe deep into social forces, that his work is, in the final analysis, a plea for the preservation and perpetuation of the bourgeois order. George Orwell sarcastically observes that Galsworthy was 'an old Harrovian with one skin too few'.<sup>2</sup> The views of the socialist critics will sound strange to readers who have heard from important critics like A.C. Ward<sup>3</sup> and Marjorie Boulton<sup>4</sup> that the aesthetic balance in Galsworthy's novels and plays is disturbed by his emotional bias towards the underdogs. In his own life-time, we may recall, Galsworthy was often called a 'socialist'—W. L. George, a contemporary critic, regarded him as 'the perfect socialist'—and Galsworthy himself thought of 'socialism' as a 'religion' which he explained in a letter to Constance Garnett (December 23, 1906) as a fight of the human spirit against 'the great economic law' that tended to push the weakest 'to the wall'. 'I start out', he writes to his sister Lily (September 11, 1905), 'from the thesis that property is not exactly a Christian, a decent idea'. However, Galsworthy's adherence is neither to socialism nor to bourgeois individualism, and he explains his position clearly in his letter to Conal O'Riordan (October 21, 1909):

Socialism, as a principle, has the bottom knocked out of it by the fact that no codes of rules will make a society any better than the bulk of individuals that compose it; just as individualism, as a principle, has the bottom knocked out of it by

the fact that the life of each individual is hopelessly entwined with the lives of all other individuals, and must be guided by consideration not only of self but of those other lives.

Galsworthy's attitude to the whole issue is obviously ambivalent and non-committal. The socialist critics with their impatient demand for total commitment on the part of the artist are disappointed by Galsworthy, and they miss the fact that Galsworthy's 'temperament is that of a complete artist',<sup>5</sup> that in his highest work he is 'the imaginative artist—the enthusiast neither for scientific observation nor for particular causes but for human life in its most universal aspects'.<sup>6</sup> Caudwell and Kettle are the most representative of the socialist critics of Galsworthy, and therefore I propose to examine their views in this paper.

Christopher Caudwell's attack is typical of the Marxist attitude to Galsworthy. His views are similar in some measure to Lawrence's :

There are no *real* human beings in Galsworthy's books except Forsytes, that is, bourgeois of a certain kind. By them he stands or falls. Even the anti-Forsytes are, as Lawrence first pointed out, simply inverted Forsytes.<sup>7</sup>

It is true that the Forsytes are all bourgeois and that Galsworthy's rebellion against Forsyteism does not carry him to the logical extreme : at the end of *The Forsyte Saga* he is deeply sympathetic to old Soames Forsyte, and the last trilogy *End of the Chapter* (1935) becomes, in spite of the critical exposure of the vices of the Cherrells, a plea for special privileges for them. But are not men of the bourgeois class real human beings ? Here Caudwell seems to have misunderstood Lawrence's point. Lawrence actually says that they are not real individuals. In all Galsworthy's books, he says, he has not been able to 'discover one real individual' ; Galsworthy's characters, Lawrence thinks, are 'nothing but social individuals'<sup>8</sup>. Caudwell as a socialist should have nothing to say against Galsworthy's characters being social individuals. However, he questions their very reality :

But these Forsytes did not in real life exist in the background given them by Galsworthy. His background is therefore unreal and nebulous. His Forsytes belong to an earlier period than that in which he puts them, and what is more important, the forces which really cause their expansion, tension and decay are omitted in Galsworthy's saga.<sup>9</sup>

There is no denying the fact that Galsworthy's rebellion is 'bourgeois rebellion' which does not lead to a total repudiation of bourgeois

standards of conduct. Nonetheless, he exposes the vices and meanness, the moral hypocrisy, the cruelty of his own class. In his early novels like *The Villa Ruben* (1899), *The Island Pharisees* (1904) and particularly in *The Man of Property* (1906) the criticism is severe, the indignation expressed really burns. *Fraternity* (1909) and *The Freelanders* (1915) are trenchant satires on the affluent class trying to do some good to the poor. What we note in the later novels is not a slackening of this criticism but an inclusive sympathy for humanity at large, for all classes of people. This, as in the play *The Foundations* (1916), does not prevent his satiric exposure of the hypocrisy with which the exploitation is carried on, and of the insurmountable barrier between classes.

But what is particularly exceptionable in Caudwell's criticism is his denial of reality to the Forsytes and to their background. Even if they belong to an earlier period, they cannot be called unreal. There may be deviations from factual history in Galsworthy's account of the life of the late-Victorian upper-middle-class people, but he has been able to represent in his novels essential history or what Ernest A. Baker calls 'a natural history of the age'.<sup>10</sup>

Galsworthy's London is not in any way less real than Dickens's. That there is none of the conflicts between London and the Forsytes, none of the pressure of urban existence shaping urban man, is because the Forsytes are late Victorian upper-middle-class people who have outgrown the conflicts and are fully shaped urban men who are nostalgically looking back to the age that is gone by, while their counterparts in the plays are portrayed as facing boldly the challenge of the twentieth century. And the countryside depicted in his novels has nothing unconvincing about it, has nothing of 'a Hampstead garden countryside with apples silver in the moonlight and sunlit haystacks'<sup>11</sup>—as Caudwell alleges; it has all the agricultural reality about it with real apples and haystacks. Galsworthy's analysis of the forces that cause the rise and fall of Forsyteism seems to Caudwell totally inadequate. What, according to Caudwell, are the real forces that cause the decay of the Forsytes? These disruptive forces are—as Caudwell enumerates—'their own strong desires' and 'greed' generated by a culture 'which forces them to trample on each other and contradict each other's desires', and also the 'anger' of the exploited class expressed through strikes, labour movements and agitations.<sup>12</sup> This revolutionary spirit in the proletariat is produced by the Forsytes themselves. So it is their inherent self-contradictions that bring about their doom. Galsworthy, Caudwell complains, fails to see this and attributes the decay of the Forsytes to Beauty or an 'intimate

incarnation of the disturbance that Beauty effects in the lives of men'. Caudwell thinks that by 'Beauty' Galsworthy means 'work of art' and 'love' and dubs his rebellion against his class as an 'aesthetic' one. He thinks that in Galsworthy's writings love is unsensual, sentimentalized, badly poetised ; his aesthetic rebellion against his class is accompanied by a sympathy for the oppressed class—a sympathy which is not a class sympathy but a cheap sentiment 'which even a Tory like Disraeli can safely show'. This is why he thinks that Galsworthy remains a self-deluded Forsyte beneath his aesthetic skin and tries to explain the decay of the Forsytes by reference to such unlikely causes as their loves, and the passive sufferings of the lower class (as in *The Skin Game*, *Justice*, etc.). Thus, according to Caudwell, Galsworthy suffers from a fundamental self-contradiction, and—

Because of this fundamental falsity in his position and the nullity of his own rebellion, Galsworthy is unable to produce living narrative.<sup>13</sup>

Caudwell seems to be swayed by his socialist impatience in his denunciation of Galsworthy's art. The suffering of the oppressed depicted in plays like *The Silver Box*, *Strife* is not quite passive ; in *Foundations* the anger and suffering take on revolutionary dimensions. Yet it is true that Galsworthy does not show the anger of the working class as the chief force that undermines the bourgeoisie. Were the labour movements so powerful in those days as to really undermine the bourgeoisie ? Had Caudwell's analysis been correct, England would have turned into a socialist country by now. Galsworthy was not a committed socialist preaching revolutionary doctrines, but a true artist who looked beyond the apparently dominant forces into deeper factors causing the decay. It is precisely this insight, this search for perennial values that enables him to produce a living art having permanent significance. Galsworthy finds 'Beauty' to be the real cause that undermines the old order. But what is Beauty ? Caudwell sees only the aesthetic aspect of the concept of Beauty. In a letter to Robert Blatchford (17 May, 1920) Galsworthy explains that Beauty has a wider significance beyond its 'narrow aesthetic sense' ; it signifies a heightened conception of human 'dignity' which includes 'the sense of proportion' as well as a 'revolt against disharmony, greed and ugliness'.<sup>14</sup> So what Caudwell defines as the cultural self-contradictions of the bourgeoisie, their greed and desires leading to mutual conflicts, are subsumed under Galsworthy's conception of Beauty.

Galsworthy depicts human relationships both at the social and at the spiritual levels, and the background against which his characters are placed

throws into focus this dual relationship. Consider Soames's relation with Irene ; Galsworthy does not portray them simply as an unhappily married couple. Soames suffers from an inherent possessive impulse, and Irene who is the embodiment of Beauty refuses to be possessed like a piece of property. Soames has never been able to get rid of this possessive instinct in his nature ; he sees it continuing in his daughter Fleur (born of his second marriage) in the form of passion that wants to possess the persons towards whom it is directed ; his own collection of valuable pictures, the emblem of this acquisitiveness, is set on fire, though unknowingly, by a passion-distracted Fleur, and it is a heavy-framed picture thrown out through a window during the rescue operation that sends Soames to his death. Caudwell fails to see the deeper realism, the symbolism that intensifies the reality of the whole situation and extends the significance of Forsyteism in its strength and weakness, its rise and decay. This is how Caudwell is led to conclusions that Galsworthy's 'Forsytes are excellent real characters...But their relations are unreal, and his background does not feed his Forsytes, they are merely set in it.'<sup>16</sup> Galsworthy's realism does not confine him to the level of social analysis ; he looks beyond the historical forces such as class-conflicts into deeper spiritual factors that determine the destiny of individuals as well as that of the community.

Arnold Kettle, one of the greatest of the living Marxist literary critics, seems—unfortunately—equally prejudiced against Galsworthy. His assessment of *The Man of Property* suffers from an obvious contradiction. At first he says that the novel has 'its core of seriousness, its spark of genuine insight which is not merely incidental but central to its very conception.'<sup>16</sup> But towards the conclusion of the discussion he says that it 'can be read today only as a museum-piece, not as a living work of art.'<sup>17</sup> Kettle seems to be unduly influenced by Lawrence's views on the book. Like Lawrence, Kettle also thinks that the novel begins as an 'effective satire,' exposing the inherent contradictions of the Forsyte clan, their acquisitiveness and deep-rooted property-outlook. He even defends Galsworthy against Robert Liddell's criticism<sup>18</sup> and asserts :

It is Galsworthy's strength, not his weakness, that he should so continuously insist in his presentation of the Forsytes on the crude material basis of their lives.<sup>19</sup>

But then Kettle repeats Lawrence's arguments that Galsworthy fails to carry the satire to its logical extreme. The so-called anti-Forsytes—Irene, Bosinney and Young Jolyon—are not true rebels but only some snobs or

humbugs who unhesitatingly accept the values and property-principles of the Forsytes.

We must note the significant roles played by these characters in the process of the disintegration of Forsyteism. Irene with her exceptional physical beauty and grace is presented in this novel as a symbol of Beauty in the fullest Galsworthian sense of the word. Bosinney is a talented architect with a profound aesthetic imagination, and it is quite natural that he and Irene will be drawn to each other. So long as Bosinney is alive Irene's apathy towards her husband Soames is more or less only instinctive. It is the shock of Bosinney's death and of Soames's beastly assertion of the conjugal right over her that turns her into a conscious rebel. Young Jolyon, though a Forsyte, is a painter and lives far away from the Forsyte atmosphere in his own world of beauty. It is therefore natural that Irene finds in Young Jolyon, whom she marries, a conscious comrade in the spiritual fight against Forsyteism. Baker points out that Lawrence fails to see the real significance of the Irene-Jolyon theme which is 'the converse and foil to the Irene-Soames theme.'<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Lawrence's and Kettle's contention that the early part of the novel is an effective satire on Forsyteism will not be tenable if Irene, Bosinney and Jolyon are not taken to represent an anti-Forsyte order of reality. The charge that Old Jolyon has been sentimentalized or is Galsworthy's 'ideal' is far from true. As the head of the family he is meant to symbolize both the original strength and the present decay of the Forsytes :

Slowly, surely, with the secret inner process that works the destruction of an old tree, the poison of the wounds to his happiness, his will, his pride, had corroded the comely edifice of his philosophy. Life had worn him down on one side, till, like the family of which he was the head, he had lost balance.

(Part Three, Chapter 3)

Galsworthy may have sympathy and respect for Old Jolyon, but he portrays objectively the disintegration of the Forsyte world. *The Forsyte Saga* represents this process of disintegration on an epic scale. It is mainly due to the influence of Lawrence that the socialist critics turned a blind eye to the deeper significance of Galsworthy's writings.

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# VIRGINIA WOOLF AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

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LAXMI PARASURAM

THE theorists of Women's Liberation Movement in the Sixties and Seventies have often looked back to Virginia Woolf and her books for arguments in support of the liberation of women from the conventional tyrannies and inequalities meted out to them at home and outside. Courses in American Universities introduced during this period invariably included books by Virginia Woolf, and her fame as an innovator in the technique and style of modern fiction often stood in danger of being eclipsed by her newly won recognition as a spokeswoman for the Women's Liberation Movement.

That Virginia Woolf in her own period created a stir among her contemporaries with her fervid support of education and independent income for women is well known. E. M. Forster, in his Reade Lecture, criticized Virginia Woolf for her ardent support of women's cause and remarked that such polemics interfered with the value of her books as art.

In this connection, it is interesting to review the writings of Virginia Woolf to find out whether her so-called polemics on Women's liberation during the Twenties and Thirties would still hold good in the present context. Polemical writings of the past generally retain only a historical interest in terms of subsequent social and economic developments, and it is possible that such could be the fate of Virginia Woolf's writings on Women's freedom. Alternatively, it is also possible that the women's cause advocated by her had fallen flat on her generation and so has now to be taken up by a subsequent generation for active perusal. Or there may be a third possibility by which her writings need not be judged on a polemic level at all—her approach to women's liberation could be on an aesthetic level which while raising some mundane issues was only exploring an eternal dilemma.

By birth and upbringing Virginia Woolf belonged to the Victorian era which had taken the mental, moral and physical inferiority of women for granted. In terms of her own analysis in the book, *Three Guineas*. Virginia Woolf belonged to the class of "daughters of educated men" which implied that her own education in terms of that of her brothers

was most grossly overlooked. Such daughters of educated men were taught and reared at home on a very small pittance while their brothers went to highly privileged and expensive schools. The only career open to such daughters was marriage and it was rarely that one of these could ever have an independent income. Even such an income when enjoyed through some inheritance or earned through writing was not at the disposal of the woman ; the husband or family managed everything and the woman had to give her silent consent to the inroads made by others into her independence and individuality. This sense of dependence and relative insignificance of woman within the family was reflected in all other spheres of life. Politically the women had no vote ; their opinions, if they had any, were not encouraged, and a job, if they could get one, was either looked down upon or miserably ill paid.

Virginia Woolf wrote two non-fictional treatises on the subject of women—*A Room of One's Own* in 1928 and *Three Guineas* in 1938. She also made numerous suggestive references to the subject in fictional terms in her novels. Both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* deal with the educational and economic issues that keep women in social and intellectual subordination. In *A Room of One's Own* she exposed the handicaps suffered by women which prevented their full development and self-expression. The book was based on a series of lectures she gave at Cambridge on "Women and Fiction", and these lectures point out how the lack of education, amenities, privacy and economic independence hampers women from pursuing any serious occupation. The numerous distractions and demands made on their time allow them no time to think coherently and the nature of their work keeps them tied to home necessarily limiting the range of their experience. Women also tend to remain inhibited as a result of their moral scruples (often unconscious) with regard to preserving their chastity. Unless a woman had a room of her own and enjoyed an independent income she would not be able to overcome these frustrations and develop her full potentiality. Such an independent room and income, Virginia Woolf points out, can be ensured only through nondiscriminatory education and job opportunities.

In *Three Guineas* also Virginia Woolf points out the lack of rights and privileges suffered by women and emphasizes the fact that an independent opinion is always based on an independent income. If men would like to get any help from the women to put an end to war and preserve the intellectual liberties, they have first to ensure education and independent income for all women.

However, it is not for a mere assertion of parity with men that Virginia Woolf takes up the claims of women for education, income and independence. As Joan Bennet points out, feminist cause is for Virginia Woolf something much more interesting and profound than an advocacy of equal rights.<sup>1</sup> And this we come to see when we read her books at a deeper level and note what she expects women to do with the education, income and independence after they have secured them. Thus in *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf insists that "the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex" (p. 74). Therefore, if a woman, a writer for example, were either to play the sedulous ape to men or to defy them in self-conscious protest, she would be being false to herself. No lock or bolt can be set upon the freedom of the mind, no sense of imitation or competition should mar the growth of one's style, and it is for this freedom to be oneself that a woman has to have a room of her own and an independent income. The same point is also stressed in *Three Guineas*.

According to Virginia Woolf, equality of opportunities in education and employment is merely a starting point of the liberation of women. These equalities, once granted, will ensure that women have the freedom to develop their own individual and natural bent of mind. However, Virginia Woolf is careful to point out that a woman's point of view when it is thus developed will turn out to be decidedly different from that of a man. Whatever is inherent and genuine in Woman's nature is antithetical to the purely masculine, and therefore the conformity and blind obedience that we have observed in women's lives is but the result of an imposition by a patriarchal society. When the feminine nature, freed of authoritative restraints and insistence on conformity, is allowed to bloom in freedom and knowledge, it will develop a character that will enable the world to reconstitute itself around a new nucleus, promote complementary ideas to those of men and finally secure an ideal of voluntary harmony and co-operation between the sexes.

In both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* Virginia Woolf elaborates on the processes of this ideal development. In the former, she concentrates on the development of a liberated woman novelist and points out the vast scope of the unknown areas of experience that will be explored by her. In the novels to be written by these new women novelists, the reader will feel as if he were "stepping into a vast chamber where nobody has yet been". There it will be "all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down not knowing where one is stepping".<sup>2</sup> But the new woman

novelist will light a torch in that dark chamber since it will be her experiences as a woman, her own unique point of view that has so far remained unexplored within that chamber. The values that men have so far established in fiction will also be changed by these women novelists. Instead of the qualities such as aggressiveness, competition, revenge, suppression and docility which men have written about so far, women will bring into prominence other qualities which will emphasize willingness, co-operation, integrity, liberty, peace and harmony. The very style and language of the new writers will reflect the change in values and the changed nature of their subjects.

However, in undergoing the process of change and development, women will have to unlearn a number of things that have hitherto been pressed on their minds. Even their ideas regarding themselves as women have so far been derived from the ideas of men. How else could one account for the extremely unrealistic and self-effacing 'angel in the house' pictures of women that we find prevalent in a patriarchal society! Male writers have built up this mythical figure of a gentle and mindless angel, and the poor women so far have done nothing but conform to this mythical ideals. The women writers in previous centuries either reproduced this myth or tried to wrench it and distort it with a deplorable degree of self-consciousness. They were hampered by an absence of tradition as well as style even if they were aware of the need to do something different. So they either blindly copied or weakly defied men, but the result could not be genuine in matter or style. Unless women succeeded in freeing themselves from these imbibed ideas and tried to cultivate an original outlook and style, there could be no genuine growth of their minds.

In *Three Guineas* Virginia Woolf speaks of the formation of an Outsiders' Club by women who have achieved independence of income and opinion. The formation of such a club will be celebrated by the elimination of words like "feminism" and "Dictatorship", since, having attained independence, the women will no longer need the support of these words. The members of this club will refuse to follow the professionalism established by men, earn only enough to keep their independence and discard the values based on aggression, war and domination of the weak. Whatever work they choose to do, will be free of commitment to unreal loyalties which create dissension and war.

Here we may note that a certain sense of discordance creeps into Virginia Woolf's concept of liberated women in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. While she unequivocally supports the fight for

equality in education and income for women, her standard of achievements for women remains different from that of men. She also seems to neglect the importance of political equality for women although it was during her time that the women's Social and Political Union was founded to fight for and finally obtain the right to vote. "Of the two—the vote and the money—the money, I own, seemed infinitely the more important", she writes in 1928 after the right to vote was won in 1919. And of the money too she seems to care no more after the terms for obtaining it are clearly stated in her two books. An independence of income seems to be required only as a pre-requisite for independence of opinion and once these twin freedoms are secured, the need for earning more and more money becomes less important. Physical and material factors are important to her only in so far as they promote intellectual liberty and she fully endorses Sir Arthur Quiller Couch's view that "a poor child in England has little more hope than had the son of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born"<sup>4</sup>. The concept of equality with which she starts her arguments finally turns out to be a pointer to the basic differences between men and women. A demand for equality creates freedom, but freedom only serves to accentuate the differences and reveal the underlying inequalities of nature.

J. B. Batchelor in his "Feminism in Virginia Woolf" says that the term "feminism" is inapplicable to Virginia Woolf because her art stresses the differences rather than the similarities between the sexes.<sup>5</sup> We have also seen how feminism is a term that Virginia Woolf would like to dispense with after the basic conditions of women's independence are won. However, it seems to me that Virginia Woolf objected not so much to the term "feminism" as to connotations of inferiority and self-consciousness of one's sex ("sex-consciousness" as she puts it) that went with the term. The conditions under which one has to be self-conscious and assertive regarding one's sexual status made her uncomfortable; what she prized above all was the freedom of mind to be oneself without any need for assertion or apology.

It is because the patriarchal society denied this freedom of mind to women that Virginia Woolf tended to associate such a society with Fascism and tyranny. The rancour and bitterness against the masculine world that some critics have seen in parts of her writing stem from this opposition to tyranny, but once the oppressive attitudes are removed Virginia Woolf's women seem happy enough to perform their ministering roles in society beside men as mothers, wives and companions. A free

and mature woman, according to Virginia Woolf, is neither aggressive nor vindictive—she understands and cooperates with men voluntarily and establishes a state of harmony and balance between the sexes out of her own uniquely feminine qualities.

The chief women characters in Virginia Woolf's novels exemplify her idealistic notion of a liberated woman. Women are given important thematic roles in her novels and the central significance of characters such as Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* and Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* is well known. It is the uniquely feminine sensibility of Mrs. Ramsay that dissolves the tensions of everyone around her and imparts balance, grace and harmony at all levels. Even after her death her influence persists enabling Lyly to balance the conflicting lines and colours within her painting, and bringing the long-sought-for reconciliation between James and his father. Eleanor in *The Waves* is another such figure—she has a rounded sense of things which according to Virginia Woolf is uniquely feminine as against the one-sided perception that is typically masculine. Standing amidst the momentous changes of people and events in the long span of 57 years she balances it all : "she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment ; to make it stay ; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding." (p. 428)

Our familiar figure of Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* also tries to bring order and beauty in human relationships—the parties given by her are intended to bring together diverse people and effect a sense of unity. Peter Walsh calls her "the perfect hostess" and her natural delight in people is such that "if you put her in a room with some one, up went her back like a cat's, or she purred" (p. 11). At the end of the book, her sensibility extends to understand and identify itself with even a deranged man like Septimus Warren Smith.

There are, however, many women characters in Virginia Woolf who fail to attain this desired excellence of rounded perception. Women like Evelyn Murgatroyd in her first novel *Voyage Out* suffer from a sense of grievance (her father having abandoned her mother) which handicaps her attitudes. Suffragists like Mrs. Seal in her *Night and Day* are at best to be laughed at for their inordinate zeal for political rights (as Virginia Woolf used to laugh at her friend, Dame Ethel Smyth, a feminist). A character like Sally Seton in *Mrs. Dalloway* who militantly imitates boys during adolescence comes to no distinction at the end, she merely

lives in a suburb of Manchester with her businessman husband and five sons.

I think that Virginia Woolf in her concept of a liberated woman was very much limited by her own fine perceptions as an artist. Only the creative aspects of the mind—a sense of freedom and ultrafine sensibility—appealed to her as important. The physical and materialistic factors when they receive her attention transcend ordinary levels to acquire a symbolic importance (as in the case of a coin in *Mrs Dalloway*). Her interest in the condition of women also tends to relate itself more and more to women either as creative artists or as creative companions of men. The ruthless professionalism that is often involved in achieving success in one's vocation was unpalatable to her and hence she did not attach any importance to competition, concentration, ambition and selfishness which are required for success in most professions. It is doubtful whether Virginia Woolf's women armed with only feminine qualities would ever command influence anywhere other than home and the writer's desk.

Virginia Woolf knew this, of course, and this is where her concept of androgynous mind becomes important. She goes back to Coleridge for support of this concept according to which all human minds, irrespective of sex differences, are constituted of both masculine and feminine elements. Masculine qualities can be found in a woman's mind and feminine qualities in man, and a right combination and cultivation of these complementary qualities can give us the best of human minds. Speaking of the androgynous mind in *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf writes :

And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female, and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect ; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought ! (pp. 96-97)



It is through the combination of these contrary and complementary powers, Virginia Woolf hopes, that women as well as men will overcome the shortcomings peculiar to any one sex and achieve a final harmony and balance.

However, there is another aspect of this androgynous mind which raises our apprehensions in spite of the final harmony envisaged. If the masculine and feminine qualities of mind were to reach full development in a state of self-sufficiency within the mind itself, will there be any need for collaboration between the sexes? In other words, will not a state of withdrawal and rejection of one another follow the full development of androgyny? Clarissa Dalloway mounting the stairs to her narrow bed, even the all-unifying Mrs. Ramsay cherishing a dark wedge of darkness and loneliness within her make us pause and look at the problem in a different perspective. Virginia Woolf's androgynous Orlando herself raises this question when she says, "If one still wished more than anything in the whole world, to write poetry, was it marriage"? Here writing poetry is the creative work of the androgynous mind and for such a mind there is no need for marriage or an active involvement with the opposite sex. Society and its diverse preoccupations as we know today will also cease to be of active concern to such minds.

The women libbers today may well hesitate to accept this rather solipsistic concept of a liberated woman in Virginia Woolf. The demand that they make for absolute equality at all levels and the premium they put on the physical and material aspects of this equality would not have secured Virginia Woolf's approval. The professions that are available to women today are much more diverse and competitive than what Virginia Woolf could have anticipated, and the standards of achievement that she set for women cannot remain the same in today's world. The few women who have attained the highest positions of power and influence have also failed to prove Virginia Woolf's theory of androgyny. History keeps its records to show that the women of power and wealth have been no less aggressive and tyrannical than men in similar situations.

Nevertheless, the significance of Virginia Woolf's emphasis on the need for individual and inner changes in personality to bring about a lasting harmony and balance amidst the conflicts and injustices of the world has to be recognized. It is this aspect of her writings that transcends changing social realities and remains valid for all time. Her prophecies on the future of women and on fiction have also proved largely true.

Modern women writers have successfully taken up the task of exploring the little-known areas of feminine sensibility, and valuable insights have been gained and recorded in contemporary fiction as a result of the lead given by Virginia Woolf.

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## LITERATURE : LITERARY AND EXTRA-LITERARY

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P. P. SHARMA

ARCHIBALD Macleish has, no doubt, revealed a wonderful insight in saying, "A poem cannot mean/But be."<sup>1</sup> A poem, or any literary work for that matter, is a verbal artifact before anything else. Grievous wrong, therefore, is done by the critic who is insufficiently attentive to the form and structure or who, after taking the merest perfunctory look at them uses them as a base from where to launch his philosophical speculation. For this kind of critic—and he is not purely hypothetical, he has been in business far too long—the locus of meaning and significance is not the words which are obviously the poet's highest concern while actually at work, but what he can make of them so that they can be fitted into some schema of his own. This approach, upsetting as it does the poet's order of priorities, relegates to the periphery what should be at the centre : the poet's most basic commitment, the commitment to his vocation as a poet, in other words, to his craft. For be it noted, the poet may be interested in espousing a cause, as we may discover later ; but the very fact that he has chosen certain words and not others and has arranged them in a certain pattern, clearly indicates that these should be seriously attended to. One of the most undisputed gains of the New Criticism has been to make us realize that we consider the first thing first, viz., the tangible notations on the white sheet in front of us—the linguistic construct. The text is the thing. Everything else is extrinsic to and contingent on it.

This is an absolutely unexceptionable position and it needed to be stated, courageously and in unmistakable terms by the New Critic because before his arrival the reign of confusion, subjectivity and arbitrary capriciousness had prevailed over a long period. Instead of trusting the tale, as D. H. Lawrence would have them do, many were in the habit of trusting the teller, thus finding a convenient excuse for making forays into the biography and psychology of the author, into such areas as were at best tangential to the text. We should be grateful that the New Criticism ultimately succeeded in restoring power to the word, the primary and primordial stuff of which literature is made.

So far, so good. But farther ahead lurks danger. We will take from the New Criticism what is useful and stop where it seems to go astray. After all, we should remember that behind us is the twenty-five-century-long critical history and tradition to fall back upon. In our excessive enthusiasm for a contemporary movement we should not let slip through our fingers the insights that were forged in the past—the insights that have successfully stood the test of several successive generations. One such insight seems to be particularly in danger of being obscured and the concern and anxiety felt at such a prospect have occasioned the writing of this essay.

From being asked to contemplate the verbal structure, now we are being asked, more and more stridently, to contemplate the verbal structure only, and nothing beyond it. This is where what was initially sound and salutary appears to be running into the quicksands of fatuity and sterility. Anybody who shows an inclination of finding anything like the author's total meaning, his world-view or his values is scoffed at and dismissed as old-fashioned. Too much, it appears, is made of the terminal, as against the instrumental, value of literature. While expounding the autotelic nature of poetry, A. C. Bradley took a line of thinking which brought to the fore the ontological gap between literature and life. He remarked, "The experience of poetry is an end in itself for the nature of poetry is not to be a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world...but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous; and to possess it fully you must enter that world, conform to its laws, and ignore for the time the beliefs, aims and particular conditions which belong to you in the other world of reality."<sup>2</sup> The notion that poetry is a world *sui generis*, an "alter mundus," a "heterocosmos"<sup>3</sup> has gained ground and it is customary in certain quarters to speak of poetry as "an object-in-itself", "as poetry and not another thing"<sup>4</sup> or to affirm with Ransom that the autonomy of the work exists for its own sake.<sup>5</sup> The transition from the formalist's position to that of the decadent is easy and smooth. It is not surprising that Flaubert had declared: "Humanity hates us; we shall not serve it and we shall hate it."<sup>6</sup> This kind of severance between literature and life can take the form of a dangerous dogma as when George Mahlis admonishes: "Never attempt to make the images of great art the companions of your daily life; do not permit their mute splendour to pervade your everyday dreams. Rather, keep them apart from the dust and trivialities of daily life and linger with them only in the rare moments of elevated joy of living."<sup>7</sup> Those who follow this "barren aestheticism"<sup>8</sup> cannot help but regard the "true usefulness" of poetry in its "perfect inutility."<sup>9</sup>

The point that I would like to make here is that the formalist approach, although valid in its limited sphere, falls painfully short of serving as an adequate tool for evaluating literature for the simple reason that literature while it is euphony, metre, diction, syntax and style is also something more than all these. In any linguistic structure there is an interaction between formal and what may, for want of a better word, be called moral dimensions and a dialectical process is clearly at work. Literature can never be music and sound only ; it has also to be philosophy and sense.<sup>10</sup> And if these latter be considered as "impurities" they are also its glories. Seldom, indeed, can a writer wholly refine himself out of existence in the sense of completely concealing his assumptions and attitudes ; he must, consciously or otherwise, inevitably, refer to a world of values. When he selects his materials, when he tries to reduce the flux of life to an order and pattern, when he introduces rhythmic incantation—or cacophony, for that matter—he is giving away part of his meaning. Once in a while he may produce something like an imagist poem which would appear to approximate to the condition of a Cézanne still-life painting. But we know that is a special category and not representative of the large body of literature. And, as for abstract art, that, too, is not entirely devoid of human connotation. Take the case of a Cubistic painting. To the untrained eye it is just a random series of daubs. Behind its lines and colours, however, there is the creator's vision of a disintegrated life, a life which has lost all sense of coherence and unity imposed formerly by the so-called material reality of the phenomenal world. It has been demonstrated that when Raphael took a pastry cook as a model for the "Holy Marie", he was abandoning, pretty much the way Copernicus was abandoning, the geocentric theory of the universe.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, words which are the poet's medium have, definitely, a far strongly pronounced referential thrust and invariably lead us beyond themselves.

To suppose that words are merely "phonetic protoplasm(s) without inherent character"<sup>12</sup> is wrong. According to Nathan A. Scott, they "like to function 'ostensively' : that is to say, they insist upon pointing to things : it makes no difference whether the things are actual or ideal : what counts is that they are extrinsic to the words themselves, for the words are not happy unless they are performing a semantic function."<sup>13</sup> In a poet's handling of language, needless to say, there is greater virtuosity than in, say, an expository prose writer's, but that does not mean that language, used with scrupulous care as it is, will capture attention "intransitively" upon itself without hinting at an external realm of meaning

and value. Once, therefore, the poet has started trafficking in words—and without that he can at best be a potential poet only—he cannot escape committing himself to some extent. To use words is an existential act in his case. Except in what has been described as “stenolanguage” one is bound to give a clue as to what one values, or how one would like to test “the validity of a certain way of seeing and responding to life.”<sup>14</sup>

It is not necessary to challenge the concept of a literary work as an organism for it can be and mean simultaneously. Moreover, it is a useful concept for it enables us to distinguish between literature as *belles lettres* and tendentious or propagandistic writings. A creative writer, instead of importing rough and ready beliefs and prejudices from his transactions with the world, submits himself to his medium, trusting that “it will do his work for him” : it will, as Blackmur says, bring the “meaning to birth.” Obviously enough, ideology does not belong here : its place is in polemics. So absorbed is the writer in his exploration of reality through words that he does not know what the final shape of his work is going to be. C. Cecil Day Lewis, himself a poet, takes us into his confidence : “What we aim at in pattern is a perfect consonance of image, rhythm and phrasing which will present the theme *whole*, with nothing irrelevant or superfluous, nothing diluted or scamped. A poem must indeed grow organically. I cannot tell in advance what shape it should take.”<sup>15</sup> Unless it is a purely mechanical exercise, the poem in its finished form seldom, if ever, bodies forth the idea which had been originally conceived by the poet. Tremendous is the effect of language when it goes “creatively to work” and all kinds of changes are wrought by it.<sup>16</sup>

The biological analogy which the organic concept of literature implies cannot, however, be pressed beyond a certain point. There is a very real sense in which we do consider both form and content, technique and theme, manner and matter while evaluating a literary work. Since in a poetic act, both rhythm and ideation, both song and vision enter into a collaborative effort, we cannot keep aesthetics and ethics strictly apart. And although I have argued against the writers’s right to smuggle in any cut-and-dried formulas in his work, this by no means should suggest that certain values will not inhere in and emerge from it. “Belief” is not quite the word to use in this context for, as Forster has pointed out, it implies a kind of starching process ;<sup>18</sup> the fact, nevertheless, remains that a set of values is discernible, sometimes more fully and clearly than at some other times, depending on the scope available to the writer as a result, among other things, of the choice of his *genre*.

This brings us to the reader's response to the attitudes and values that a work embodies. It would be naive to maintain that we read a work of literature for no other purpose than that of getting our own convictions confirmed.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, unless there is a possibility of our own perspective on life being challenged and changed, nothing will often induce us to spend our time and attention on any piece of writing. Richards goes to the extent of declaring that "Poetry is failing us, or we it, if after our reading we do not find ourselves changed."<sup>20</sup> The reading of a masterpiece is always a vital experience after undergoing which things will never remain the same as they were before. But the reader, too, has his part to play: he has to lay himself open, without reservation, to the author. Instead of looking for support for any preconceived notions of his own, he should rather be willing to be influenced by the author's sensibility. Such, indeed, is the range of our empathy that we can appropriate, may be only temporarily, a world totally alien to our own. It should be, moreover, remembered that no good writer, since he is not aggressively didactic or overtly hortatory, ever drives the reader too hard.<sup>21</sup> His work is often of the nature of an *opera aperta*, or an open-ended parable and his style has a great capacity for plurisignation or multiple layers of meaning. The reader on his part should, however, be prepared for "that willing suspension of disbelief for a moment which constitutes poetic faith."<sup>22</sup> It is because of these reasons that one who has been brought up as a Christian sometimes finds himself more at home in the pagan world of Homer, Virgil, Aeschylus and Sophocles than that of Dante.<sup>23</sup> In all fairness, it may be conceded that a Catholic Christian may have a slightly better grasp of extra-poetical overtones while reading *Divine Comedy* than the unbelieving reader and that even after his imaginative participation is over he continues to stay within the orbit of Dante's belief.<sup>24</sup> But neither of these two factors is a serious hindrance to a non-Christian's appreciation of this work.

In spite of all this, there may be very genuine grounds for the reader's quarrel with the writer. When, for example, caring little for internal coherence and artistic integrity, the writer chooses to engage in rhetoric, or, when, instead of letting a verbal situation suggest certain values, the writer himself imposes some ready-made beliefs, he acts, in the famous Sartrean phrase, in bad faith. We are all aware how Coleridge felt unhappy with Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode", particularly when the child is apostrophized as "best philosopher" and "seer blest." Similarly, it is possible for a modern reader to be at odds with Jean Genet for his glorification of depravity. Graham Greene may well be suspected

of special pleading and even that great wizard of words, William Faulkner, may fail to carry the reader along with him in his delineation of Mink Snopes in *The Mansion*. A writer, in other words, may generate counter-belief by violating a basic pattern of human valuation.<sup>25</sup>

Walter Pater, a confirmed aesthete as he is, cannot forbear surreptitiously sneaking in moral judgment when he draws a distinction between "great" art and "good" art.<sup>26</sup> Our evaluation of literature is bound at some point to spill over from literary into extra-literary. "Literary criticism," says Scott, "is always becoming 'something else,' for the simple reason that there is always 'something else'."<sup>27</sup> "Pure" artistic appreciation of art, Eliot also says, is not much good for "limited and transient human beings existing in space and time."<sup>28</sup> That some extra-poetic criteria will finally have to be applied to literature is also admitted by him : "The 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards ; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards."<sup>29</sup> Since "there are luxuries of detachment one should like to afford, but cannot,"<sup>30</sup> one has to do a lot of picking and choosing among works of proven literary excellence. And because, as Leavis says, a certain valuing is implicit even in our aesthetic realization,<sup>31</sup> a majority of us tend to prefer *The Old Man and The Sea* to "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber". We have strong aesthetic cravings but they are continually being acted upon by moral impulses. What Eliot has said in this context can hardly be bettered: "The author of a work of imagination is trying to affect us wholly, as human beings, whether he knows it or not ; and we are affected by it, as human beings, whether we intend to be or not."<sup>32</sup> Our total response to a literary work cannot but take into account its purely literary aspect, that is, the verbal structure, as well as its extra-literary aspect, that is, the world of values to which it refers.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. "Ars Poetica," in Gay Wilson Allen, *et al*(eds.) *American Poetry* (New York, 1965), p. 874.
2. A. C. Bradley, "Art For Art's Sake," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London, 1950), pp. 4-5.
3. The phrases are Baumgarten's according to whom "the end of a work of art is not to reflect reality, nor to foster morality or yield pleasure ; the aesthetic end is the perfection of sensuous cognition....that is beauty...." Quoted by M. H.



Abrams, "Belief and the Suspension of Disbelief," in M. H. Abrams(ed.) *Literature and Belief* (New York, 1958), p. 6. This volume will hereafter be referred to as *Literature and Belief*.

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8. I. A. Richards, *Poetries & Sciences* (New York, 1970), p. 30.
9. Allen Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry* (New York, 1948), p. 343.
10. T. S. Eliot, in fact, suggests in "Milton 1" that in order to extract everything possible from *Paradise Lost* we read it at two different levels, "first solely for the sound, and second for the sense." *Selected Prose* (ed.) John Hayward (London, 1953), p. 129.
11. Naum Gabe, "The Constructive Idea in Art," in Robert Herbert (ed.) *Modern Artists on Art : Ten Unabridged Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1964), pp. 103-113.
12. Cleanth Brooks, "Implications of an Organic Theory of Poetry," in *Literature and Belief*, p. 67.
13. Nathan A. Scott, "The Collaboration of Vision in the Poetic Act : The Religious Dimension," in *Literature and Belief*, p. 112.
14. Richard Hoggart, "Why I Value Literature," in *The Critical Moment : Essays on the Nature of Literature* (London, 1964), p. 32.
15. That 'ideology' should not be confused with 'ideas' and that the former word is often used in a pejorative sense is evident from a passage like this ; "But to call ourselves the people of the idea is to flatter ourselves. We are rather the people of ideology, which is a very different thing. Ideology is not the product of thought ; it is the habit or the ritual of showing respect for certain formulas to which, for various reasons having to do with emotional safety, we have very strong ties of whose meaning and consequence in actuality we have no clear understanding." Lionell Trilling, "The Making of a Literary Idea," in *The Liberal Imagination* (New York, 1951), p. 286.  
For the inhibiting effect of ideology on the art, what the dramatist Eugene Ionesco says is very relevant : "...every work of art ...is outside ideology, is not reducible to ideology. Ideology circumscribes without penetrating it.... A work of art is the source and the raw material of ideologies to come", *The Observer*, June 29, 1958.
16. C. Cecil Day Lewis, "The Making of a poem," in *The Voice of Prose* (New York, 1966), p. 164.
17. See Murray Kreiger, *The New Apologetics for Poetry* (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 23.
18. E.M. Forster, "What I Believe," in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London, 1951), p. 77.
19. According to Cleanth Brooks, we are simply mixing up poetics with rhetoric while enjoying only that which accords with our belief. See *Literature and Belief*, p. 54.

20. I.A. Richards, *Poetries and Sciences*, p. 47.
21. Even Engels, one of the founders of left-wing criticism, does not approve of an author's attempt at manipulating the reader's response. As he puts it : "I think that the tendency must arise out of the situation and the action without having to be revealed explicitly ; and the poet is not required, to produce a pet solution." Quoted by Georg Lukacs, *Writer and Critic & Other Essays* (London, 1970), p. 81.
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Principal Amiya Kumar Sen, a distinguished alumnus of this University, has been associated with English studies in the Eastern region for several decades. For many years a member of the Department of English, Calcutta University, he has perhaps been most influential with his students in fostering a study of English poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a scholar he has received wide recognition in academic circles. Bennett Weaver in *The English Romantic Poets : A Review of Research* (1956) observes: that Shri Sen's forty-seven page article entitled "Platonism in Shelley" published in the *Journal of the Department of Letters of the University of Calcutta* (1927) "anticipated the interest of later scholars in the poet's response to the Greek philosopher".

The Board of Editors of this journal present this special number in acknowledgement of the debts they owe to a teacher whose contributions to university education, interest in English poetry and reverence for learning have inspired generations of students.

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# ENGLISH SONNETS ON LIBERTY AND PATRIOTISM IN THE ROMANTIC AGE

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ARUNODOY BHATTACHARYYA

## I

LOVE of liberty is in the blood of the Romantic poets : national as well as individual freedom was the first condition of romanticism. Thus we find in romantic poetry, and remarkably in romantic sonnets, the sonorous voices of the champions of liberty and haters of injustice and political bondage. And the patriotism of the romantics is a natural and inevitable corollary to this passion for liberty. Of course it cannot be claimed that all the major romantic poets felt equally strongly for freedom. Wordsworth wrote the maximum number of sonnets on the subject. Though Coleridge was the pioneer in this respect, as in most respects, his thoughts on liberty are better expressed in *Fears in Solitude* and *Ode to France* than in his scanty 'political' sonnets ; Shelley and Byron are ever passionately urging individual liberty in lyrics and in some sonnets ; and even Keats, the least interested in politics among the poets concerned, has a few sonnets touching the theme of liberty and patriotism. It must be so when we consider how the political revolution in France in 1789 had inspired the literary Revolution of 1798 in England. Another great influence was Milton's. From him the Romantic sonneteers did learn how the sonnet form served as an effective medium for the expression of patriotic feelings, righteous indignation against wrongs and prophetic exhortation. The very gravity of its form and diction makes the sonnets uniquely effective for this purpose. In such sonnets with political, social and historical background, the accuracy of facts should not however be over-emphasised. Occasionally the poet's knowledge or information may differ from the real or historical account ; his interpretation of some incidents may similarly be at variance with the universally accepted interpretation ; how he states his ideas is the main object of our study ; whether he can rouse the intended feelings and create a graceful and successful appeal to the soul of his readers, should be the first criterion of judgement.

## II

Love of liberty and patriotism is naively expressed in a number of sonnets. In Keats's early sonnet, *On Peace*, where he seems to echo Leigh Hunt's view as published in the spring, 1814-issue of *The Examiner*<sup>1</sup>, the poet hopes to see England happy and peaceful, and this peace presupposes "Europa's liberty". The last five verses form an apostrophe to Europe, urging it never to submit to a tyrant's power. It is a reminder that for any nation there is nothing more precious than freedom. The spirit is similar to that in Wordsworth's first Calais sonnet, where the "Fair Star of evening" is almost identified with England. Wordsworth wishes both of them 'One hope, one lot/One life, One glory'. In the earnest apostrophe to the Star, the poet hopes that England will remain as bright as the Star, unshadowed by any force; and concludes with a note of deep personal sadness :

... I wish many a fear  
for my dear country, many heartfelt sighs,  
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

Wordsworth hails ecstatically the glorious hour when the liberty of Greece was proclaimed by Flamininus, the conqueror of Philip of Macedon. Liberty is higher than "all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven" (Part II, S. I.). Out of his love of universal freedom comes the eulogy to Thomas Clarkson, when the latter's endeavour for abolishing slavery did succeed (II. iii). In the Calais sonnet on the female Negro passenger (I ix), Heaven and earth are appealed to feel "for the afflicted race". In none of these do we get good poetry. But the second Tyrolese sonnet ("Advance—come forth") which invokes Liberty itself, is sublime in conception and beautiful in expression. Its unity of thought, its rhetorical art, its imagery, its treatment of Nature, and, above all, the perfect harmony between the content and the sonnet form cannot be overpraised. Coleridge personifies liberty in his 'vision' in the sonnet on Burke. Liberty appears as a mother in black before her son, Burke, and entreats him to champion her cause. The sonnet is practically a monologue by this personified Liberty. Byron, in *On the Castle of Chillon* addressed liberty as "the Eternal Spirit". Wordsworth in "Advance—come forth" apostrophises Liberty as 'Stern nymph' and 'dread power'. He does so also in *On the Subjugation of Switzerland*. This tendency to personify abstract ideas is one of the

important features of his poetry : Cf. "Stern daughter of the voice of God" in *Ode to Duty*. A romantic sensibility is always at work ; and not only abstract ideas, but inanimate objects also gain in personality by association ; they become as important as human beings. Thus the Castle of Chillon means as much as Bonnivard himself to Byron ; and the fortress Saragossa is endowed with tremendous significance by Wordsworth (II. XVI).

In a couple of sonnets by Keats, the theme of patriotism occurs as an auxiliary thought. The musical "Happy is England ! I could be content" mainly illustrates romantic fancy and quest for newer life and beauty ; but it is nevertheless a record of the English mind of Keats. All that is English is beautiful and attractive to him : the English girls of simple beauty, the beauty of Nature in English gardens and the refreshing wind blowing "Through its (England's) tall woods with high romances blent". Also in "Oh ! how I love, on a fair summer's eve", Keats talks of warming his breast with "Patriotic lore", though his main desire is to enjoy the beauty of Nature and of poetry. Milton and Sidney are dear to him primarily as great poets ; their patriotism is a secondary matter.

### III

A deeper and more effective form of patriotism is found in some sonnets in the shape of criticism of the present vices and weaknesses of the nation followed by an exhortation for an all out fight. In the great apostrophe to "Intrepid sons of Albion", Wordsworth is inspired to give the heroic call :

... death, becoming death is dearer far,  
When duty bids you bleed in open war.

But more than physical power, it was the moral courage which was wanting in the spiritually degenerated England of the nineteenth century. The growth of materialism with the rapid increase of national and individual wealth was making the nation weaker, and unfit to face an ordeal of foreign invasion. A number of sonnets aim at driving away the love of lethargy and ease from the English, and giving them a moral boost. In Wordsworth's "England ! the time is come when thou shouldst wean/ Thy heart from its emasculating food", we hear the voice of a patriotic bard imposing an awful responsibility on his country :



... at this day

If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,

Aught good were destined, thou wouldst step between.

And the sonnet ends with a mixed feeling of pride and fear :

Oh grief that Earth's best hopes rest all with thee.

Wordsworth, in a number of sonnets preaches the necessity of 'plain living and high thinking' and denounces "Rapine, avarice, expense" ('O Friend I I know not...'). He gives an image of a shallow glittering river and compares it with a life of outward pomp without essence (1. 5). Dependence on craftsmen, cooks and grooms at every step of life appeared as a positive proof of the weakness of the English people to the poet. Not only that utilitarianism had taken away "inward happiness" and made the English "selfish" and without "manners, virtues, freedom, power" (Milton : thou shouldst...). Miltonic austerity in life is the only cure for the present malady. To impress upon his fellow countrymen the transcending nobleness of Milton, and also to pay homage to his confessed master, Milton's soul is compared to a star (1. 9). There is a tremendous contrast, not only in sense, but also in diction. While England without Milton is "like a fen of stagnant waters..." (2. 3), Milton was endowed with "a voice whose sound was like the sea", Shelley is likewise extremely moved by the wretched condition of the then England which suffered specially from a want of morality and noble aim.<sup>3</sup> Worthless rulers and army, Christless churches, and the less-said-the better senate, were in his opinion, all hurrying the ruin of the country. But the difference between Wordsworth and Shelley is also clear and considerable. Wordsworth turns to England's glorious past for a cure of this pollution ; he is for a true revival of the ideals of Milton, Alfred and other great sons of the country, whereas Shelley looks forward to the future like an optimistic prophet who foresees the birth of 'glorious phantom' from the 'graves' of time, to "illumine our tempestuous day". (*Sonnet : England in 1819*). This sonnet, written perhaps a few months earlier than *The Ode to the West Wind* anticipates the glorious prophecy of the latter. Keats's sonnet, *To Haydon*, the most truly patriotic one from him, is another observation and criticism of the vices in the national life, prompted by an eagerness to see England raised to glory — an urge somewhat similar to what we find in Wordsworth's "Milton ! thou shouldst be living...". Envy and malice have fostered a

"money mong'ring pitiable brood", which form the bulk of the society. Haydon stands as an example to his countrymen teaching them 'highmindednes', "loving gentleness for the great man's fame" and "singleness of aim".

What when a stout unbending champion awes  
Envy, and malice to their sty ?

The rhetorical question bespeaks the vigour and high spirit that inspire the sonnet ; the metaphor in 'Sty' aids to the effect by implying a concrete image.

#### IV

The bulk of the Romantic sonnets on the theme of Liberty sings the glory of freedom-fighters of various nations. In Wordsworth's 'National Independence and Liberty' Group, Germans have been encouraged in "A Prophecy" (II. iv) to rise up as one united nation against enemies and traitors. Sonnets have been dedicated to the Biscayans, Spaniards and Spanish guerillas as well. There are a number of sonnets, on the glorious endeavour of the Tyrolese ; their leader, Hoffer, is glorified as the 'god like warrior' (II-ix). Francois Toussaint, the captured leader of the revolting Negroes of St. Domingo, Schill, the Prussian hero ; Gustavus IV, the Swiss King, and Palafox, the stubborn defender of Saragossa ; — all these spirited challengers of Napoleon are highly eulogised. Coleridge showers high compliments on patriots and lovers of liberty like Earl Stanhope, La Fayette, Henry Erskine, Charles Stanhope, Joseph Priestley and Burke. He is full of gratitude for each and every such 'hireless priest' before the 'insulted shrine' of liberty, fighting the 'hireling' brutes. Most of Coleridge's sonnets of this topic are marked by a dryness of tone and dearth of lyrical emotion. But *La Fayette* is one of the few truly good sonnets. It combines strength and beauty, and shows exquisite verbal felicity. In Byron's *On the Castle of Chillon* too, we have a similar picture of a freedom fighter cast in the oppressor's dungeon. Bonnivard and La Fayette are of the same heritage — great sons of their motherlands who defy all bondages. Coleridge's hero does not have to court martyrdom; even in his imprisoned state he is enthused by the report of the success of the freedom movement. He joins their shout of joy without caring for his personal suffering. He is the caged 'Madin Bird' whose spirit is ever-free. But Byron brings into focus the significance of

martyrdom. His emphatic assertion "Their country conquers with their martyrdom" reminds us of Milton's immortal lines in the *Massacre sonnet* :

Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow  
O'er all the Italian fields ...

Coleridge's sonnets on Erskine and Stanhope are not at all affected if we substitute the name of one hero for the other indiscriminately. Nor is this inappropriate for they all represent the high-patriot class. The sonnet on Burke has been called 'regretful' by E. K. Chambers<sup>3</sup>, but regret is not its final impression. Here too Coleridge pays tribute to an English statesman whom he considers to be lofty-minded, having genius, and disinterested. The sonnet starts with a note of regret, which soon changes to eloquent praise, and finally regret is dismissed and substituted by joyous congratulation.

In Keats's tribute to the Polish patriot, Kosciusko, the hero appears more as a representative of the noble class patriots, than as an individual. Kosciusko, for his courage, heroism and patriotism ranks with Alfred and similar great immortal spirits. But there is no reference in Keats's *Kosciusko* to any real event or anything peculiar to Kosciusko. This ecstatic apostrophe might have been made to any other hero. In sharp contrast to this, Coleridge's *Kosciusko* concentrates on Kosciusko, the man, and presents a dramatic moment when the hero's life hangs in the balance under a 'hireling's sword'.

## V

This adoration of patriots is naturally accompanied with an intense hatred of tyranny, treachery and slavery. In the first sonnet on Napoleon, Wordsworth 'griev'd' and pitied the historical hero, but it was a grief and pity born out of a bitter and desperate realisation of the inhumanity of the tyrant. The tyrants cannot thrive ultimately : In a late sonnet "Dedicated to Liberty and Order" ("People I your chains are severing link by link"), Wordsworth expresses his attitude to tyrants :

While all lie prostrate, save the tyrant few  
Bent in quick turns each other to undo,  
And mix the poison, thy themselves must drink.  
In another sonnet on Napoleon he declares—

Curses are his dire portion, scorn, and hate,  
Internal darkness and unquiet breath. (II. xxi)

Shelley's inborn hatred of tyranny is passionately expressed in a couple of sonnets. The one, written after the fall of Bonaparte, begins with "I hated thee, fallen tyrant I..." Napoleon's victory was ephemeral, and his end, disastrous: because he chose to 'revel on the grave of liberty'. The paradoxical appellation given to Bonaparte, 'Unambitious slave', is expressive of the freedom-lover's indignation. But the most beautiful expression of patriotic feeling among the romantic sonnets, the most inspired and inspiring, artistically brief yet eloquently poetic, is found in Byron's lone sonnet on liberty, *On the Castle of Chillon* which ends with the worshipping of Bonivard's foot marks:

...may none those marks efface I

For they appeal from tyranny to God

Wordsworth's "A prophecy" (II. iv) ends with a condemnation of German traitors who let their own Nation down:

—Woe to them I but heaviest woe and shame

To that Bavarian who could first advance

His banner in accursed league with France.

First open traitor to the German name I

A severer condemnation of treachery and anti-national spirit is found in Coleridge's *Pitt*. Nowhere in the body of the sonnet is the name of Pitt mentioned, and, but for the title, we would not have been able to discover the object of derision. The significance is that Coleridge here makes Pitt stand out not as a mere individual, but as the representative of a dangerous type of statesmen who have an 'Iscaiot mouth' and are

More blasting than the mildew from the South

## VI

In three sonnets of Wordsworth we have a deeper and finer insight into the true spirit of liberty. They are *Indignation of a High minded Spaniard*, "There is a bondage worse far worse to bear" and *Feelings of a Noble Biscayan at one of those Funerals*. All of them touchingly exhibit the shame and ignominy of slavery and vehemently denounce the thought of relief, content or pleasure in such conditions. Death is thousand times better than falling in love with a slavish life. The Spaniard can bear with the destructive activities of

the tyrant, but to hear promise of benefits from the same tyrant is too much to endure : "Then the strained heart of fortitude proves weak". For people under foreign rule there is nothing delightful or vital in life :

And earth with all her pleasant fruits and flowers  
Fade, and participate in man's decline (l.xix).

And, as the Biscayan says in deep grief :

A garland fashioned of the pure white rose  
Becomes not one whose father is a slave (II. xv).

Shelley's *Sonnet : Political Greatness* is in a similar vein :

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,  
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,  
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame.

## VII

The same spirit which glorifies liberty and cries out against slavery sometimes fills the romantic sonnets with a holy grief for the loss of some great force of liberty. How deeply moving is Wordsworth's lament *On the subjugation of Switzerland* ! Addressing Liberty he says :—

Thou from thy Alpine holds at length are driven  
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.

The famous sonnet which mourns the loss of majesty and liberty of Venice is really moving in its sentiment and admirable for eloquent and dignified phrases and diction. Two purely romantic traits characterize the sonnet : love of liberty and fascination of the glorious past. The diction is particularly felicitous, inevitably bringing into focus the sense of contrast between the former Venice and the present one ;

No guile seduced, no force could violate  
What if she had seen those glories fade  
Those titles vanish....

It is notable how the two contrasted states are subtly linked by the alliterating 'g' 'f' and 'v' sounds, and out of this contrast ensues the sorrow of the closing verses. The regret for fallen greatness marks several other sonnets of Wordsworth like "Bruges I saw attired with golden light" where 'the sunless hour "Best suits with fallen grandeur . . .', and the sonnet on Zaragoza (II. xvi) :

These desolate remains are trophies high  
... they attest  
Thy matchless worth to all posterity (5, 7-8)  
and yet another in the 'Ecclesiastical' group (XXV) :

...Babylon,  
Learned and wise hath perished utterly  
... Memphis, Tyre, are gone  
With all their arts (ll 9-10, 12-13).

Ironically enough, Shelley's *To Wordsworth* mourns the decay of the high spirit of liberty in Wordsworth himself. Wordsworth, who appeared to Shelley as much the high-priest of Nature as of Liberty, guarding it against the 'blind and battling multitude' and guiding it with the light of his soul, had no longer the same zeal in the second decade of the century. Hence Shelley's lament :

Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,  
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cesse to be.

### VIII

The patriotic sonnets in many cases are marked by a profound religious feeling. For Wordsworth, history, patriotism and religion are often allied ; that is why his Ecclesiastical sonnets have also patriotic flavour. Fighters for liberty and motherland win God's favour and blessings and unjust aggressors and tyrants are punished by Him—this is the sentiment in many sonnets. Milton's *On the Massacre at Piedmont* invokes God to avenge the murder of the Waldensians ; Byron firmly believes that Bonnivard's foot-marks "appeal from tyranny to God" ( *On the Castle of Chillon* ) ; Keats, eulogising Kosciusko, thinks of a loud hymn which will reach "where the great God lives for evermore". Love of liberty and patriotism is perhaps the noblest and most sacred ideal of human life. Hence the frequent association with God. In sonnets XIX and XIII the noble floods of liberty finally merge into the sea of religious feeling. Schill is to get his reward after death from "A Judge, who, as man claims by merit, gives," and Palafox's country would be blessed as

... smilingly  
The Eternal looks upon her sword that gleams  
Like his own lightning.

This ring and string of the Old Testament is definitely an integral and essential part of Wordsworth's philosophy of liberty,

patriotism and politics. A stronger illustration occurs at the end of his Russian sonnets (XXXVI) where the plight of the French army in Russia is attributed to God's will :

He whose heaped waves confounded the proud boast  
Of Pharaoh, said to Famine, Snow and Frost,  
'Finish the strife by deadliest victory' I

## IX

All studies of romantic sonnets dedicated to liberty tend ultimately to be the study of Wordsworth's sonnets on the same theme.

It is curious to note how Wordsworth's attitude to Napoleon parallels that of Shakespeare to annihilating Time. He is sometimes panicky and confesses helplessness in the face of Napoleon's ever-victorious power, just as Shakespeare occasionally feels that everything is at Time's mercy. Wordsworth says,

When, looking up at the present face of things  
I see one man of men the meanest too I  
Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,

... ..

I tremble at the sorrow of the time. (I.xxii)

and

Alas I what boots the long laborious quest  
Of moral prudence ... ..  
If sapient Germany must lie deprest  
Beneath the brutal sword ? ... (II. xii).

And Shakespeare surrenders to Time in sonnets like "Since brass nor stone" (65) and

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced (64).  
But Shakespeare sometimes defies Time in strong terms :

Yet do thy worst, Old Time, Despite thy wrong,  
My love shall in my verse ever live young (19).

So does Wordsworth too. We have his prophecy concerning Napoleon :

Him from that height shall Heaven precipitate  
By violent and ignominious death (II. xxi) ;

he declares ;

Nor discipline nor valour can withstand

... ..

A people on their own beloved land

Risen like one man, to combat In the sight  
Of a just God for liberty and right.

But whereas Shakespeare with his Renaissance confidence in individual power relies on his poetic strength to counteract Time, Wordsworth with his deep religious piety relies on God's grace to counteract Napoleon and the evils he stands for.

Though Wordsworth urges life-at-stake struggle against foreign invasion and tyranny in all forms, there is a fundamental difference between his patriotic sonnets and the battle-songs of Campbell and Scott. He does not glorify war itself, but looks upon it as an evil necessity.

In this respect, too, Wordsworth follows Milton.

"...What can war but endless war still breed", Milton asks in the sonnet *On the Lord General Fairfax at the siege of Colchester*, Wordsworth likewise, observes :

"The material courage of a day is vain  
An empty noise of death the battle's roar"

(1-2, II,xviii)

and

O'erweening Statesmen have full long relied  
On fleet and armies and external wealth  
But from within proceeds a Nation's health

(XX,xxix)

and

by the soul  
Only, the Nations shall be great and free

(I,xi)

The inner strength of the soul which inspires people to fight for their nation, is nationalism. The spirit of Nationalism is explained in one of the *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order* :

As leaves are to the tree whereon they grow  
And wither, every human generation  
Is to the being of a mighty nation (XII)

He has discovered it since he can

Dive through thy stormy surface of the flood  
To the great current flowing underneath (VII).

This is the true Wordsworthian spirit—the brooding and ruminating spirit, always in quest of something profound and permanent. It would be rather unthoughtful to dismiss Wordsworth's sonnets on patriotism and liberty as "repellent often in their



provincial self-importance and bourgeois noble enthusiasm".<sup>4</sup> After all, they are more than a poetic mouthpiece on public affairs, they record the fortunes of England and other European nations in the first decade of the Nineteenth century. The spirit of nationalism, religious feeling and courage in the midst of blackest gloom that Wordsworth preaches in the sonnets; the torture by the tyrants and the nefarious trick of talking about giving benefits to the subjugated; all these have grown in significance, instead of being obsolete, with the passing of time. The patriotic strains of Shakespeare's history-plays, the prophetic strain of Milton, and the philosophic vision of Burke have combined in a large number of these sonnets.

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1. Alleen Ward, *John Keats*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1963, p. 37.
2. Cf. Coleridge's  
 " Meanwhile, at home,  
 All individual dignity and power  
 Engulfed in Courts, Committees, Institutions,  
 Associations, and Societies,  
 A vain, speech-mouthing Speech-reporting Guild,  
 One Benefit Club for mutual flattery,  
 We have drunk up, demure as at a grace,  
 Pollutions from the brimming cup of wealth.  
 ("Fears in Solitude", ll 53-60)
3. S. T. Coleridge, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1950, P. 36.
4. John Jones, *The Egotistical Sublime*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1964, P. 164.

## SHELLEY AND HIS COSMOPOLITANISM

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R. C. SHARMA

ALTHOUGH the admirers of Shelley passionately repudiate the charge of 'ineffectuality' labelled against him, it is obvious that by and large opinion still veers round the oft-quoted statement of Matthew Arnold about Shelley's being an 'ineffectual angel'. Even if his ideas are repellent, as T. S. Eliot thinks, it does not mean that they are wrong, vitiated, or unsound. Bernard Shaw puts Shelley among those English poets who were prophets : "Langland and Latimer and Sir Thomas More, John Bunyan and George Fox, Goldsmith and Crabbe and Shelley, Carlyle and Ruskin and Morris, with many brave and faithful preachers, in the Churches are out of them, of whom you have never heard, were our English prophets<sup>1</sup>."

Shelley was a republican and had profound faith in democratic ideals. He regarded all human beings as the members of one great family. Notwithstanding his sympathies for all alike, he believed that "a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable, and he eagerly ranged himself on the people's side."<sup>2</sup> In his enthusiasm for the suffering humanity he regarded exploited and oppressed people as 'the sons of one great mother'. It is interesting to note that Shelley condemned his own country for annexing several ignorant and disturbed countries of the world to the British empire. Shelley finds no difference between the life of the poor in his own country and that of the poor in other parts of the globe. It speaks of his cosmopolitanism.

Freedom from local and national attachments and prejudices, and considerations such as caste, creed, and colour is called cosmopolitanism. In fact, prejudices stem from a narrow outlook to undermine the position and worth of the people of other groups or nations; but the concept of cosmopolitanism springs from breadth of vision and fellow-feeling; and it promises equality and liberty to the people of all creeds and of all nations. Shelley who always sided with the oppressed not only of his own country but of the whole world, desired a closer union of the working men of all countries in general and those of England in particular for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow land-owners, mill-owners, and

the oppressors. It was this feeling of universal brotherhood that enabled him to give no quarter to "Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice", It made him celebrate love "everywhere as the sole law which governs the moral world" ;" and it prepared him to champion the cause of suffering humanity at large.

Shelley thought that man has a close proximity to the religion his parents believe in, and the country he was born in. No doubt, Shelley also gives expression to national sentiments when he says ; "Our poets, and our philosophers, our mountains, and our lakes, the rural lanes and fields which are ours so especially, are ties which unless I become utterly senseless can never be broken asunder". But it does not mean that the poet is expressing prejudice against any other country of the world ; however, to love one's country, to love the city of one's birth, and to love one's parents, wife and children is "an indirect denial of duty which humanity imposes on you of doing every possible good to every individual under whatever denomination he may be comprehended to whom you have the power of doing it." Shelley's love for his country is illustrative of his enthusiasm for the emancipation of the poor and the oppressed.

Shelley regards all unfortunate men as his brothers and countrymen, for they are all 'sons of the great mother.' He asks the Irish people : "What is there in a man being an Englishman, a Spaniard, or a Frenchman that makes him worse or better than he really is. He was born in one town, you in another, but that is no reason why he should not feel for you, desire your benefit, or be willing to give you some advice which may make you more capable of knowing your interest or acting so as to secure it." Shelley advises the oppressing nations to put themselves in the position of the oppressed : it will make them realise the injustice and cruelty arising from oppression. His statement appears fully justified and true when we look into and understand the sincerity and genuineness of his sentiments for the Irishmen as expressed in his Address to the Irishmen.

In Shelley's opinion, the man who sees the misfortunes of the people of other countries and does not attempt to succour the sufferers is "bastard mongrel bred up in a court, or some coward fool who was a democrat to all above him, and an aristocrat to all below him". Lack of fellow-feeling, Shelley contends, has forced nations to rise against other nations : they employ 'the

subtlest devices of mechanism and mind to waste and excruciate and overthrow.<sup>10</sup>" This kind of hostility among nations has divided the community of mankind into "ten thousand communities each organised for the ruin of the other."<sup>11</sup> Division of the world into innumerable nations and countries and the extermination of brotherly feelings have bred pain, violence, and ruin.

Shelley counselled tolerance in religious matters, for he thought that an orthodox attitude to religion was bound to result in selfishness. For him, both the Protestants and the Catholics were brothers; he felt a celestial kind of satisfaction in voicing their grievances and devoting himself to their service; and, to say the truth, no pleasure was so great to him than that which he should feel if his "advice could make men of any professions of faith, wiser, better and happier<sup>12</sup>". Those groups of nations that fight on the grounds of religious ideology forget that "the gates of heaven are open to people of every religion, provided they are good<sup>13</sup>." Shelley demolished those barriers of institutional religion which were detrimental to human happiness.

Generally, people following a particular sect or religion think that they alone are entitled to Heaven; but Shelley asks: "Can you think that the Mohometans and the Indians, who have done good deeds in this life, will not be rewarded in the next?<sup>14</sup>" This question suggests that if men treat their fellows as brethren, irrespective of their religion and nationality, the most perfect harmony on any matter will not be obstructed. A true cosmopolitan as he was, Shelley promised to do everything in his power that "was honourable, fair, and open to gain it<sup>15</sup>." In his opinion religious fanaticism has been the real cause of injustice, oppression, and slavery; and he saw that it existed even among the poor. However, he attributes this evil to ignorance among the masses.

Shelley says that one should not "inquire if a man be a heretic, if he be a Quaker, or a Jew, or a heathen; but if he be a virtuous man, if he loves liberty and truth, if he wishes the happiness and peace of human kind<sup>16</sup>." While advising the Irish people to believe in universal brotherhood, Shelley makes it clear that his views are extended not to the Irishmen alone but "to all of every persuasion, of every country"<sup>17</sup>. He is confident that virtue and justice will have their victory and the schemes for "the happiness and liberty of the world will not be wholly fruitless<sup>18</sup>." There is no gainsaying the fact that Shelley finds the whole world divided

into the two classes of the rich and the poor, the oppressor and the oppressed, the privileged and the unprivileged; and therefore, he ranges himself on the side of the poor, the oppressed and the unprivileged irrespective of their caste, creed and nationality.

Shelley holds that the men, who have a tendency to freedom and are capable of regulating that tendency, may be relied upon without caring for their caste, creed and nationality. Such men, he contends, speak the truth and defend the cause of the oppressed against the oppressor; they are able to see what is right and good. In his opinion such endeavour to emancipate their fellow-beings without giving attention to the narrow idea of nationality. It is they who will never ask "whether a man is an Englishman or an Irishman, a Catholic, a heretic, a Christian, or a heathen, before their hearts and their purses are open to feel with their misfortunes and relieve their necessities<sup>19</sup>."

Shelley's scheme of emancipation "comprehended every individual of whatever nation or principles, that shall fold in its embrace all that think and all that feel; the Catholic cause is subordinate and its success preparatory to this great cause but that of universal happiness to no party but the people<sup>20</sup>." He, thus, promises that the attempts at reform in the existing social, political, and economic spheres would bring about "the peace, the harmony, and the happiness of Ireland, England, Europe, the world<sup>21</sup>". Like a prophet he foresaw the approaching time "when the Mahometans, the Jew, the Christian, the Deist, and the Atheist will live together in one community, equally sharing the benefits which arise from the association. and unite in the bonds of charity and brotherly love<sup>22</sup>". It may be added that Shelley is an optimist when he thinks about the people at large.

Shelley's cosmopolitanism can be seen in his declaration that "among true and real friends, all is common<sup>23</sup>". Ignorance, envy, and superstition, he emphasises, are inherent handicaps to the friendly relations among mankind. Therefore, according to Shelley, "the only perfect and genuine republic is that which comprehends every living being<sup>24</sup>". The artificial distinctions of nations, cities, families, and religions are "only general names expressing the abhorrence and contempt with which men blindly consider their fellowmen<sup>25</sup>". Man, therefore, ought to love not only mankind as a whole but "every individual of mankind<sup>26</sup>"; it does not mean that one should love the members of one's domestic circle less, but

it is one's duty "to love those who exist beyond it, more"<sup>27</sup>. For Shelley, love is the panacea for all sorts of evils,

Although Shelley loved his own country like any nationalist of his time, yet he never drew a line of distinction between the oppressed of his own country and those of others. His cosmopolitanism can be gauged from the fact that he fought for the cause of the Irish people, celebrated the Greek War for Independence, filled the Italians with the hope of liberty, and condemned his own country for enslaving and tyrannising over the people of India. In a nutshell, his mission was to emancipate 'mankind' and the 'unawakened' earth.

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11. *Ibid*.
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13. *Ibid*.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
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18. *Ibid*.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
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## IMAGE IN COWPER'S POETRY

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MAYA CHAKRAVARTY

The study of imagery is an essential part of literary criticism. The new movement in literature known as Imagism has enhanced the importance of the poetic image so much that the critics of today are prone to judge poetry in terms of the image primarily. The mechanical way of studying figures of speech is a barren and obsolete device. The real significance lies in the fact that the metaphor or simile should be inevitably required : it should explore, in the words of Middleton Murry, "relating and ordering experience".

In the study of imagery the main emphasis should fall upon the imagination which insensibly leads us to glimpse the personality of the poet. Miss Spurgeon has opened a rich vein along this line. She asserts that the personality of the poet is revealed in the imagery exploited in his poetry. "The imagery he instinctively uses," she remarks, "is thus a revelation largely unconscious, given at a moment of heightened feeling, of the furniture of mind, the channels of his thought, the qualities of things, the objects and incidents he observes and remembers and perhaps most significant of all those he does not observe or remember."

The Eighteenth-Century has been accused of a certain narrowness as well as shallowness of poetic theory and practice because it based its theories upon the supremacy of reason and distributed the free working of imagination and the full expression of emotion. Yet in Cowper we find ample evidence of the free working of his mind. His poetry is the natural and unaffected expression of himself. In the study of imagery in Cowper's poetry we should lay the main emphasis upon the imagination which insensibly leads us to glimpse the personality of the poet.

When we analyse the imagery of the poems, the whole mental picture of the poet comes before us. The most notable image that he employs, however, is that of a mariner on a storm-tossed sea. To the imagination of Cowper the sea spoke ever of wonder, of mystery, of the darkness of melancholy. "I think with you," he writes to Unwin in 1781, "that the most magnificent object under heaven is the great deep ; and cannot but feel and unpolite species of astonishment, when I consider the multitudes that view it without

emotion, and even without reflection. In all its various forms, it is an object all others the most suited to affect us with lasting impressions of the awful power that created and controls it."

In *The Winter Walk at Noon* this tempestuous state of the human being "is linked to the working of a sea".

Six thousand years of sorrow have well-nigh  
Fulfill'd their tardy and disastrous course  
Over a sinful world ; and what remains  
Of this tempestuous state of human things  
Is merely as the working of a sea  
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest.      ll. 734-739.  
What is human life ? is asked in *Hope* and the sage replies :  
A painful passage o'er a restless flood  
A vain pursuit of fugitive false good,  
A scene of fancied bliss and heart-felt care,  
Closing at last in darkness and despair.      ll.-36.

Cowper's vision of life as a voyage over a tempestuous sea is fully developed in a hymn, entitled *Temptation* :

Tho' tempest-toss'd and half a wreck,  
My Saviour thro' the floods I seek ;  
Let neither winds nor stormy main,  
Force back my shatter'd bark again.      ll.17-20.

For the figurative use of "storms" and "tempests" he was indebted to the Bible. Obviously there is nothing original in this imagery which has been used hundreds of times by other poets. What is remarkable is the frequency with which Cowper employs it and the strong personal meaning he attaches to it. The poet used the sea and storm imagery most often when he could speak freely of his afflictions as in the letters to Newton, or when he was most deeply moved, as in the poem *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*. In this poem, employing the familiar image with remarkable effectiveness, he likens his mother's death and salvation to the coming into port of a ship :

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast  
( The storms all weather'd and the ocean cross'd )  
Shoots into port some well-haven'd isle,  
So thou, with sails how swift ! hast reach'd the shore  
Where tempests never beat nor billows roar.      ll.88-97

But he felt that for one damned like himself there would be no furling of canvas in a pleasant harbour. In the same poem he speaks of his own situation as nearly hopeless :



Me howling winds drive devious, tempest toss'd,  
 Sails ript, seems opining wide, and compass lost,  
 And day by day some current's thwarting force.  
 Sets me more distant from a prosp'rous coarse. ll.102-105

In this connection Maurice J. Quinlan asks, "Why did this image of a passage over a stormy sea become such a favourite with Cowper?" And the critic's answer is, "perhaps in the beginning 'storms' and 'tempests' were convenient euphemism for words like 'insanity' and 'madness', or possibly nightmares of shipwreck haunted his sleep, as did other horrible sights." The truth was that at bottom he had no confidence in life. The loss of his mother shook his belief in the stability of human happiness. In various other poems Cowper describes, not himself, but man in general as an unhappy 'mariner' on a 'storm-tossed sea.' For example, in *Mortals I Around*, he says :

Thus the wreck'd mariner may strive  
 Some desert shore to gain,  
 Secure of life if he survive  
 The fury of the main. ll.13-16.

Stanzas five and six of *Human Frailty*, develop the image still further :

Bound on a voyage of awful length  
 And dangers little known,  
 A stranger to superior strength,  
 Man vainly trusts his own.  
 But oars alone can ne'er prevail  
 To reach the distant coast,  
 The breath of heav'n must swell the sail,  
 Or all the toil is lost. ll. 17-24

Generally 'storms' and 'tempests' represent the difficulties and anxieties that have plagued the poet. In the *Memoir* the terms are used particularly to refer to his mental agony and the first period of insanity. He thus describes his fear of the near approach of his dreaded examination before the House of Lords.

I looked forward to the approaching winter and regretted the flight of every moment that brought it nearer; like a man borne away by a rapid torrent into a stormy sea.

In his correspondence, 'storms' and 'tempests' are striking metaphors used to indicate the rage of his insanity and his fear of damnation. He wrote to Newton, on October 2, 1787 :

Never was the mind of man benighted to the degree that mine  
has been The storms that have assailed me would have  
overset the faith of every man that ever had any.

In the Hymns 'storms' and 'tempests' signify the tribulation  
of mankind and of the poet. Lodwick Hartley says, "the first source  
of unity in the hymns comes in the witness that they give of inner  
conflict, in an attempt to reconcile a deep and inescapable sense of  
personal sin. It is a drama of the soul played on a small stage."

At the end of his life he returned to his sea imagery and  
employed it with an interesting variation in his final poem,  
*The Castaway*. It is the last great original poem, in which the  
highest expression of his despair is to be found. The poet returns  
to the image of a mariner on a storm-tossed sea, as a fitting climax  
to a career of despondency. In this poem, Cowper pictures the  
plight of a sailor washed overboard. His shipmates, unable to  
rescue him, toss casks and coops into the waves to keep him afloat,  
but the ship sails on, leaving the poor wretch to his cruel fate.  
The darkness enveloping the scene is but the poetic counterpart of  
that of the poet's mind :

Obscurest night involv'd the sky,  
Th' Atlantic billows roar'd,  
When such a destin'd wretch as I,  
Wash'd headlong from on board,  
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,  
His floating home for ever left. II. 1-6.

The whole poem is obviously symbolical of Cowper's own  
mental state. Clearly and distinctly, as in the gleam of a lighting  
flash amid the darkness, we see the castaway perish. We know that  
the illfated poet was no less doomed than the castaway,

But wag'd with death a lasting strife,  
Supported by despair of life. II. 17-18.

The composition of the poem, indeed, is due, as the poet  
himself informs us, to the fact that—

But misery still delights to trace  
Its semblance in another's case. II. 59-60.

With this couplet as introduction, Cowper gives us the last  
picture of himself in verse that was to come from his pen. There  
is perhaps no sadder stanza in English poetry than

No voice divine the storm allay'd,  
No light propitious shone ;

When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,  
 We perish'd each alone ;  
 But I beneath a rougher sea,  
 And whelm'd in deeper gulphs than he.                      ll. 61-66.

Lord David Cecil remarks, "He, too, was a Castaway, the Castaway of Humanity. As he looked, the accumulated anguish and despair of his life of unparalleled disaster caught fire and blazed up in a last towering flame of poetry."

Maurice J. Quinlan finds in this poem an interesting variation on his familiar image of shipwreck and mariner. This variation of the image is significant.

So long as Cowper possessed a slight hope of salvation, shipwreck was a proper symbol for his uncertain fate. But when he composed *The Castaway*, he felt so sure of damnation, that in the last stanza, he not only compares his end to that of the drowned sailor, but even speaks of himself as one already dead.

There is a recurrence of such nature images as 'wilderness,' 'deserts,' 'gulfs' and 'precipices' in his poetry. Several of these metaphors appear in a series of letters Cowper wrote to his aunt after his release from Dr. Cotton's asylum. Poems like *Yardly Oak* and *Alexander Selkirk* are other examples where the poet expresses his sense of despair and desolateness. He sees a symbol of himself in the long-lasting Oak when he observes :

Thou' like myself hast stage by stage attain'd  
 Life's wintry bourn ; thou, after many years,  
 I after few ; but few of many prove  
 A span in retrospect ; for I can touch  
 With my least finger's end my own decease  
 And with extended thumb my natal hour,  
 And hadst thou also skill in measurement  
 As I, the past would seem as short to thee.                      ll. 144-151.

Even in the lines on *Alexander Selkirk*, although it is the marooned sailor that speaks in the first person, his isolation from society is clearly a symbol of Cowper's spiritual isolation. Two things were responsible for this feeling of isolation — his realisation that though reason eluded him, his nature could not dispense with it, particularly in an age that was dominated by reason, and the fact that Evangelicalism, the religion of the day, failed to heal him. Evangelicalism, after his conversion, not merely gave his

melancholy a religious cast, but also removed all hope of alleviation and the result was infinite despair. He imagined himself to have committed some sin, the only one that was unpardonable, and that this had separated his soul from God. He described himself as a "stricken deer," damn'd below Judas."

Believing that he must have been shut out from God's mercy, he began to reflect on the application of various Biblical passages to himself. The language of Scripture was so much in his mind that he probably came to use Biblical imagery almost as second nature. This practice was not uncommon with people who constantly read the Bible, but Cowper, having a poet's mind, often fused the images to form distinctive patterns. Some of these patterns express typical Evangelical sentiments; others seem to be symbolic utterances of his innermost reflections, particularly of his fear and despair.

A good example of his Biblical imagery exists in his frequent use of 'worm' and 'thorn' as a metaphor. Lodwick Hartley, in his study of *Olney Hymns*, finds some significance in the images. "The humility symbolised by the worm; the suffering, by the thorn; and the inner conflict, by the tempest are not mere 'universals' in the Evangelical religious experience. They become intensely personal elements of a religious approach." The word 'worm' has been used at least six times in his Olney hymns. In number V, he writes:

Now, Lord, thy feeble worm prepare I

For strife with earth and hell begins. ll. 17-18

In number XLI, he refers to himself as "thy rebellious worm" and in XLII, he is "but a worm." He alludes to his conversion in Hymn LII, when he says: "God has breathed upon a worm." In Hymn LXII, men in general are 'sordid worms' and in Hymn LXIV, man is a 'vain glorious worm.' The same image is later used in *Truth* to describe the vanity of man:

So sings he, charm'd with his own mind and form,

The song magnificent—the theme a worm! ll. 411-412

In *Charity*, God sheds his mercies "upon worms below," and in *Hope* Cowper writes:

Now let the bright reverse be known abroad;

Say man's a worm, and pow'r belongs to God. ll. 710-711

Occasionally the image changes slightly and instead of describing man as a 'worm' the term designates some evil that affects him. Thus, in *Expostulation* (line 90), Cowper refers to

'the worm of pride' that exists in man, and in *The Progress of the Error* the "insinuating worm" is an appositive for the "Serpent Error" that twines round human hearts.

Another image, common to both speech and poetry, is connected with 'thorns'. Cowper uses the metaphor in various ways. In Hymn XLIV, he observes :

Ah I were I buffeted all day,  
Mock'd, crown'd with thorns, and spit upon,  
I yet should have no right to say,  
My great distress is mine alone ll 17-20.

The 'thorn' image is used most frequently, however, to describe the sufferings that beset the Christian on the road to eternity. In Hymn X, Cowper refers to "thorns of heartfelt tribulation" and in Hymn LXII, he writes,

No more I ask, or hope to find,  
Delight or happiness below ;  
Sorrow may well possess the mind  
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow. ll. 9-12.

Cowper uses this image again in his poem *To an Afflicted Protestant Lady* where he remarks that the traveller seeking salvation, has always found "thorns and briars" along the road.

The adjective 'thorny', also appears in a metaphorical sense. In *Truth* (line 454) Cowper speaks of the Christian's thorny road, and in the *Winter Evening* (line 333) he says it is the better part of wisdom for one to compare his lot with those less fortunate, for in this "world ; so thorny," happiness does not exist without some "thistly sorrow at its side." Again in *Retirement* (lines 753-4) he remarks 'not' knowing God, we reap, with bleeding hands, 'Flow'rs of rank odour' upon thorny lands." The 'thorn' image had for Cowper a special personal meaning. This view gains support from the remarkably subjective use of the metaphor in one of his letters to Newton : 'My brier is a wintry one,' he writes in despair, "the flowers are withered but the thorns remain. My days are spent in vanity, and it is impossible for me to spend them otherwise. No man upon earth is more sensible of the unprofitableness of a life like mine than I am, or groans more heavily under the burthen ; but this too is vanity because it is vain ; my groans will not bring the remedy, because there is no remedy for me."

Although other poets have often used the 'thorn' image, Cowper's special addiction to it indicates that it had a strong

personal meaning for him. He convinced himself that he had been guilty of a sin that excluded him completely from grace and he sobbed out his gnawing sense of despair that there never was so abandoned a wretch, so great a sinner as he. In comparison to Oswald Doughty, there is much evidence that guilt was an essential in Cowper's life. The *Memoirs of William Cowper Esq.*, written by himself, reads like a case-history of neurotic guilt and terror.

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## SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF POETRY

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K C. LAHIRI

AN attempt to interpret Sri Aurobindo's concept of poetry is a daring venture. It is presumptuous to claim that one has clearly understood it oneself, for Sri Aurobindo, a mystic as he is, always envelops his thought and realization in a heavy smoke screen, rather light screen, or better, effulgence screen, of language. One may just endeavour to render these as far as one can understand with the limitation of the comprehending mind, and when they go beyond human comprehension, there is no better way than having recourse to the last resort of the reverent student, namely reporting in the language of the master himself.

Sri Aurobindo, internationally known as a Yogi, a stalwart in spiritual discipline and vision, is no less a figure as a creative artist and speculative critic, a poet and a theorist. His theories of poetry are not just theories, that is, mere ideas of an abstruse, abstract nature, but they are living practical idealities realized by him in his life and letters. His concept of poetry is implied in his creative work : in his long masterpiece, *Savitri*, and in many shorter lyrics. His poetics is built on what he feels rather than on what he thinks about poetry. In this, as in everything else, Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and feelings are indistinguishable.

Searching for explicit definitions of Sri Aurobindo's literary theories, we find them primarily in his prophetic volume, *The Future of Poetry*, published serially in the philosophical monthly, *The Arya*, exclusively contributed to by himself. His views on poetry are also to be found scattered in his letters, published in four volumes, and especially concentrated in the third Series, and in the letters on *Savitri*, and *Life, Literature and Yoga*.

Sri Aurobindo's poetics marks a distinct departure from all the theories of literature formulated so far by critics in the East as well as in the West. His very attitude to creative activities in man's life differentiates his concept of poetry from that of his predecessors. Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic experiences have the freshness of prophecies. Even truths about poetry, which have already been observed by older critics, now passing through the fire of this seer's spirit, strike us as new, vibrant with the intensity of his feeling and aglow

with the effulgence of his vision. The entire critical genius of the world, with its divergent tendencies in oriental and occidental minds, receives a rare synthesis in Aurobindoan poetics. Rooted in Indian civilization and nourished by European culture as he was, Western literary tradition and Eastern aesthetic heritage were thoroughly assimilated in his critical consciousness.

For Sri Aurobindo, poetry is not 'a product of the surplus creative energy of man' or an 'elevated superior pastime' or even 'an exercise of the aesthetic or imaginative powers of man'. But poetry, in his conception, is 'the fullest breath of life, one of the highest powers of truth', one of the most effective 'levers of ascension to a higher evolution'. Poetry, to him, is 'a direct and concentrated expression and communication of the Divine Truth and Beauty and Delight to the responsive human spirit'. This is more than the conception of poetry as a divine inspiration. It is a direct realization of poetry as an organic link between life earthly and Life Divine.

Sri Aurobindo tells us about the essence of poetry, its first origins and its last aims. He presents a consistent idea about the source and nature of poetry, about its basic elements, fundamental functions, and ultimate purpose. Aristotle's idea of pleasure from imitation puts the emphasis on 'artistry' in poetry, and does not go beyond the 'aesthetic' level: Poetry becomes an activity of the intellect: the deep spirit of man is hardly called upon to participate in it. Wordsworth's conception of the poet as 'a man with more lively sensibility and a more comprehensive soul' is after all a vital mental conception: It is doubtful if his conception of the poetic soul is truly spiritual, as it is with Sri Aurobindo. Poetry, in Sri Aurobindo's view, springs from inspiration and intuition; it is sustained by vital and imaginative powers; and it works for the purest pleasure and total progress of man. Poetry, in his conception, is a super force, at once vital and spiritual, mental, and supramental.

He views the relation of poetry to human life in a light not seen by any literary theorist to this day. All serious thinkers on literature and art, from Aristotle to I. A. Richards, from Abhinavagupta to Rabindranath Tagore, recognized the vital role that poetry can play in human life for moral health or civilizing refinement. Sri Aurobindo is undoubtedly the first to realize convincingly the power of poetry in man's life as a spiritual force, leading it from progress to progress,



from life vital, through life imaginative, to Life Divine, and providing a 'living linkage' between our worldly existence and Supreme Reality.

At the start, 'poetry is a psychological phenomenon'; the poetic impulse is a 'highly charged power of aesthetic expression' of the mind and soul of man. It is the kind of vision, the quality of feeling, the level of mind, the power of soul that matters. All else is subsidiary: Rhythm, language, structure are all categories of vehicle: 'They get their character from the psychological power.' The line of evolution of poetry must follow the development of the soul. 'The soul of man can be regarded as an unfolding of the spirit in the material world. Man, though in body, proceeds by the mind till it can exceed itself and become a spiritual mind, the Divine Mind in man' (*The Future of Poetry*). Poetry expresses the turn of the human mentality in word and in the form of beauty, and discloses a divine quality in the material and outward being.

For Sri Aurobindo, poetry is to draw upon the higher domains of human consciousness. 'The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a plane of our being above and beyond our personal intelligence, a supermind which sees things in their innermost and largest truth by a spiritual identity. . . . It is the possession of the mind by the supramental touch and the communicated impulse to seize the sight and word, an invasion by a superior power' (*The Future of Poetry*). The poet struggles to reach that something which lies 'beyond itself, something that is a dim foreshadowing of the divine urge which is prompting all creation to unfold itself and to rise out of its limitations towards the God-like possibilities.' The stress is always on the soul. The subtle inner psychic being of the poet is ever open to the hidden, unrevealed beauty or truth of things.

Sanskrit literary theorists like Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta refused to regard poetry as merely an art or craft of words. They found the soul of poetry in *Dhwani* or suggestiveness, which produces *rasa*, vital pleasures of aesthetic nature. This pleasure, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not simply of the senses or of emotion but of the imagination, but primarily of the soul, the deeply conscious mind. The poet is ever open to the hidden spirit of Truth and Beauty and has a pressing interest on the soul, both on the part of the poet and on the part of the reader, the whole conception of poetry is psychologically conditioned by Sri Aurobindo. Poetry, as much as Yoga, becomes a spiritual discipline by which the present level of man's consciousness can be elevated. Like the Upanishadic

seers, Sri Aurobindo 'identifies the poetic activity of man with his highest spiritual aspiration of which a poem is a living concrete symbol.'

When Sri Aurobindo conceives poetry as the expression of the highest spiritual consciousness of man, 'spirituality' is to be taken in Aurobindoan sense, not as high intellectuality, or emotional fervour or aspiration, or mental belief or ethical turn of mind, or idealism (all these being of value to spiritual evolution, though these still belong to the mental plane), but spirituality is to be regarded as an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to soul other than body, life, mind: an entering into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe, 'a transformation of our whole being, a waking into a new becoming' (*The Life Divine*).

The development of poetry, to Sri Aurobindo's mind, is linked with the evolution of mankind. The future of poetry will run parallel to the progress of human civilization. 'The great poet interprets to man his present, or reinterprets for him his past, but can also point him to his future and reveal to him the face of the Eternal' (*The Future of Poetry*).

The poet of 'the intuitive reason, the intuitive senses, the intuitive delight-soul in us' will rise towards a still greater 'power of revelation nearer to the direct vision and work of the Overmind from which all creative inspiration comes'. The poet is accepted by Sri Aurobindo as the Seer, 'the Truth-conscious, the Truth-finder, born as a flame from earth and yet the heavenly messenger of the Immortals'.

The truly creative personality of the poet cannot be a mere mental or vital or even imaginative-aesthetic being. The poet is not merely a man endowed with unusual vital sensitivity and power of imagination with the help of which he creates a work of beauty and joy through a skilful portraiture of human feelings and thoughts. Poetry bids for being all—comprehensive and co-extensive with cosmic existence. To the poet, aiming at 'a harmonious and luminous totality of man's being, the whole field of existence will be open for its subject, God and Nature and man and all the world, the field of the finite and the infinite. It is a new and higher evolution, a second and greater birth of all man's powers and his being and action and creation' (*The Future of Poetry*). Poetry

embraces 'all life and all being and all action of the deeply awakened modern spiritual man'.

Such a mystic conception naturally leads Sri Aurobindo to associate poetry with *mantric* potency. In all poetic activity so far Sri Aurobindo discovers one great possibility: 'the discovery of a closer approximation to what we might call the *mantra* in poetry. . . Poetry in the past has done that in moments of supreme elevation; in the future there seems to be some chance of its making a more conscious aim and steadfast endeavour' (*The Future of Poetry*). In the integral sense of a spiritual awakening and transformation the poetry of the future will be written by the poet-seer of the new age to bring about a harmonious fusion of the human word with the Divine Word, essential for the utterance of the *mantra* through the human medium. In the present mystic psychological climate the poetic expression is apt to come close to incantation. The important function of *mantric* poetry is to establish a direct and intimate, flaming and firm connection, nay, union between the human soul and the Divine Reality in its multiple aspects.

As to the sources of the poetic art Sri Aurobindo starts with the big Upanishadic question: 'By whom impelled does the mind fall to its target?' ('*Kenesitam patati presitam manah/kena prānah prathamah praiti yuktah/Kenesitam bācamimām badanti/Caksuh shrotram ka u devo yunakti*'—*Kenopanisad*, 1/1).

In his *Letters*, 3rd series, Sri Aurobindo concedes that the source may be anywhere: the perceptive 'physical plane, higher vital self, creative intelligence, dynamic vision, illumined mind', that is, Overmind or Intuition, Inspiration or Imagination. He draws subtle distinctions between poetry written from 'poetic intelligence' and poetry emanating from 'Higher Mind', between poetry of the 'inner mind' and poetry of 'dynamic vision', between poetry written from 'psychic inspiration' and poetry coming from 'overhead inspiration'.

The letters on *Savitri* embody a sustained rationale of the Overmind inspiration or aesthesis which alone can bring about the poetry of the *mantric* power and beauty, the overmental poetry on a sublimely sustained level. Sri Aurobindo lays emphasis on direct experience or Intuition, on the intensity of consciousness. Great poetry comes from 'the soul-vision behind the word' (*The Future of Poetry*). He recognises several distinctive planes of inspiration which supply the immediate dynamics of poetic creation.

We seem to be aware of the living Word which has been there from the beginning behind all creation. Thus inspiration plays a supreme part in Sri Aurobindo's own poetic composition. He receives everything from 'above' as Divine grace. 'He acknowledged the existence of an external source of power and illumination from which he received a gift that he had not deliberately sought'. Poetry effects the merger of conscious intellection and spontaneous intuition into supreme aesthesis. In the present crisis of human evolution man's intelligence 'seems on the verge of an attempt

to rise through the intellectual into an intuitive mentality'. As the result, the aesthetic mind, 'whether it takes form in the word of the poet or in the word of the illuminated thinker, the prophet or the seer, can be one of the main gateways' (*The Future of Poetry*).

As to the function of the essential imagination in poetry, it 'does not stop with even the most subtle reproductions of things external or internal, with the richest and most delicate play of fancy, or with the most beautiful colouring of words or images'. It is 'creative of the most real: It sees the spiritual truth of things' at different levels of Overhead consciousness; The level of Higher, Illumined mind, the level of Supramental Imagination, the home of creative Truth-consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo attributes to poetry the following functions: Linking the World and Super Reality; Helping human progress; Providing purest pleasure; Lifting, and communicating between levels of consciousness; Revealing and transmitting Truth through the human channel. Poetry synthesises Spirit and Matter, and combines the 'truth and splendour of the Spirit with the truth and splendour of Matter in actual life'. Poetic intensity is the great solvent of the apparent irreconcilables in the two worlds of the Soul and Facts. 'Poetry and art are born mediators between the immaterial and the concrete, the spirit and the life. This mediation between the truth of the spirit and the truth of the life will be one of the chief functions of the poetry of the future' (*The Future of Poetry*). Sri Aurobindo puts the poetic spirit in the 'shining front of the powers and guides of the ever-progressing soul of humanity'. Poetry has not only reflected faithfully the level of consciousness and culture attained by man at any point of time, but is also the surest index of the level of consciousness and culture man is destined to attain in future.

Regarding pleasures expected from poetry, aesthetic pleasure, that is, 'external sensible, even inner imaginative, pleasure', is only the first of the pleasures yielded by poetry. Here also there is ample scope for heightening and refinement, till we reach the point of the soul, our true being, and look at everything from that psychic or spiritual level. Then the poet realizes that he was all the time working from this spiritual delight. The nature of poetic pleasure is made comprehensive by Sri Aurobindo by extending it to Soul-Delight. The soul awakened does not suspend, or exclude the sensuous, vital, intellectual or imaginative powers,

but uses these as channels. Each one of them is fully psychicalised or spiritualized and reaches the highest peak of its own fulfilment. Soul-Delight, fully integrated, satisfies all the responsive parts and powers of the human personality. When the creative mood suddenly descends on the poet, he feels cerebral, physical or nervous sensations : excitement of brain and heart, a shiver down the spine, a constriction of the throat, a precipitation of water to the eyes, a standing up of hairs of the flesh.

Sri Aurobindo developed a universal outlook on all significant aspects of poetry. His consciousness is lifted above national, even human, level, and transcends the cultural genius of the East and of the West to a sublime order. Poetry, in his view, communicates between different altitudes of consciousness. 'Today mankind, satiated with the plains, is turning its face towards the heights once more, and the poetic voices that will lead us thither with song will be among the high seer voices'. Sri Aurobindo believes that 'all poetry is mental or vital or both, sometimes with a psychic tinge. The power from above the mind comes in rare lines, lifting up the mental and vital inspiration towards its own light and power' (*Letters*, 3rd Series).

The tension in the human consciousness has now been 'raised to the  $n$ -th power. Self-consciousness raised so often to the degree of self-torture, masks the acute travail of the spirit. The human laboratory is working at white heat. The 'golden lid' of the Upanishads brings into the light of common day 'realities beyond'. All efforts of modern poets are 'a travail for transcendence. The constant preoccupation of our poets is the pain of the present and the passion of the future. They are all looking ahead or beyond or deep down, always yearning for another truth and reality which will explain, justify and transmute the present Calvary of human living'.

The process of poetic creation is the process of poetic transmission through the fit human channel. The act of creation is to concentrate all one's faculties, including the one of craftsmanship or organisation, on transmitting 'the whole poem, form and all', from the higher planes above or the psychic regions within, where it already exists, ready and complete. The creative poet renders himself a fit channel of transmission without any let or hindrance from any part of himself. 'Poetry is concentrated silence in the mind with openness to the Word that is trying to

express itself. The transmitting mind must become a perfect channel, not an obstacle' ( *Letters*, 3rd series ).

Totally absorbed in the substance or soul element of poetry as Sri Aurobindo is, he is not blind or silent to its formal aspect. He does not ignore the value of craftsmanship in poetry, but assumes the 'close co-operation between conscious technical effort and the subtle power of creative inspiration working from some occult source: 'The search for technique is simply the search for the best and most appropriate form for expressing what has to be expressed, and once it is found, the inspiration can flow quite naturally into it' ( *Letters*, 3rd series ).

To supplement the work of the original inspiration, which somehow vanishes after a time, the poet puts in his own conscious technical labour at the whole organisation of the poetic structure, carried out deliberately, patiently and perseveringly, even painfully, to achieve a perfect mating between the inspiring idea and its verbal rhythmic form. The poet is not merely an artist of words, that is, an aesthetic being who takes an unusual delight in constructing beautiful objects and ideas through a skilful arrangement of words.

The language of the poet is saturated in the colour and tone of soul-awareness. 'An acute tension of consciousness has necessitated an overhauling of the vehicle of expression. Poets seek for new modes of expressing the inexpressible.' The native language of poetry is a 'revelatory, inspired, intuitive word, limpid or subtly vibrant or densely packed with the glory of ecstasy and lustre' ( *The Future of Poetry* ). As to the music of poetry, it proceeds from the perfect harmony between the inner spiritual rhythm and the outer prosodic structure and sound. 'It is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds.'

## OSORIO AND REMORSE

JIBON BANERJI

### I

*Osorio* : A Tragedy, as originally written in 1797, (*Osorio*, a Dramatic Poem, MS. II : *Osorio*, The Sketch of Tragedy, MS III) was published in 1873 by John Person (under the editorship of R. H. Shepherd). It was included in *Poetical and Dramatic Works*, 1877-80, (editor : R. H. Shepherd) and in *Poetical Works*, 1893.

Four MSS<sup>1</sup> are (or were) extant, (1) the transcript of the play as sent to Sheridan in 1797 (MS. I) ; (2) a contemporary transcript sent by Coleridge to a friend (MS. II) ; (3) a third transcript (the handwriting of a 'legal character') sold at Christie's, March 8, 1895 (MS. III) ; (4) a copy of Act I in Coleridge's handwriting, which formerly belonged to Thomas Poole (MS. P.). The text as printed in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. II, pages 518-597, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, (Oxford, 1912) follows MS. I. The variants as published in this edition are derived from MSS. I, II as noted by J. Dykes Campbell in *Poetical Works*, 1893, from a MS. collation (by J. D. Campbell) of MS. III and from a fresh collation of MS. P. None of the MSS. has a list of the characters.<sup>2</sup>

*Osorio* was begun at Stowey in March, 1797.<sup>3</sup> Two and a half Acts were written before June, four and a half Acts before September 13, 1797.<sup>4</sup> A transcript of the play (MS. I) was sent to Drury Lane in October, and rejected, on the score of the 'obscurity of the last three acts', on or about December 1, 1797<sup>5</sup>.

As soon as a copy of *Osorio* was found among Godwin's papers,<sup>6</sup> previously believed as missing, Coleridge wrote, "I certainly will correct it ; and changing both the titles, and the names of the Dramatic Personae, procure it to be presented to Covent Garden".<sup>7</sup> He thought "of breaking it up", for "the planks are sound, and I will build a new ship of old materials".<sup>8</sup> This he wrote to Cottle at the end of May, 1798. But he took many years to give shape to his plan. When at last it was reshaped we find Coleridge had willingly and sometimes pathetically submitted to the stage managers, actors and actresses for the reconstruction



of his play.<sup>9</sup> The revised play shows, in a certain measure, capitulation to popular taste ; but the compulsions of theatrical production gave him a new insight into dramatic art, and what emerges in the process of revision is a much greater cohesiveness, in both technique and purpose

When Coleridge first thought of rewriting *Osorio*, it was to change it into a poem, with a new name, for publication in a separate little volume.<sup>10</sup> ( MS. II is subtitled "A Dramatic Poem". ) He wrote to Southey that alteration would require a "devilish sweep of revolution".<sup>11</sup> This "devilish sweep" actually took quite a few years and his thoughts turned later to stage production. He was perhaps inspired by George Beaumont's comment that, with a few alterations, the play might fit nicely for the stage.<sup>12</sup> When Beaumont, who had seen MS. II, visited Greta-Hall in 1803, he was on intimate terms with Kemble (MS II was at Greta-Hall). It was actually MS III, the copy held by Linley and sent abroad in theatrical circles, that Coleridge got back to revise. Coleridge urged Godwin to locate it at Mary Robinson's.<sup>13</sup>

When rehearsals on *Remorse* started sometime in the first week of December, 1812<sup>14</sup>, Coleridge entered a new phase of the "tedious business" of revision.<sup>15</sup> His letters written at this time suggest an interesting association with the Drury Lane Committee. He must have enjoyed the nickname "Amendable Author", given to him by Arnold and Raymond for his "helpfulness" in fitting out *Remorse* for the stage.<sup>16</sup> And his prefaces and letters give fawning thanks to those who hacked away the "poetic" passages.<sup>17</sup> He even graciously laboured to improve Teresa's part for Miss Smith (Mrs. Sarah Bartley) as he felt the character was "not fully developed, and quite inadequate to her extra-ordinary powers".<sup>18</sup> But Coleridge must have seen that the more *Remorse* improved as an "acting play" it moved further from the design of a "dramatic poem".<sup>19</sup> His hard work was rewarded on the opening night (January 23, 1813); the play received, as Coleridge reports to his wife, "unexampled Applause"<sup>20</sup> from a crowded London audience.

## II

*Remorse*, the recast of *Osorio*, was first published as a pamphlet of seventy-two pages in 1813, and went immediately through three editions. The second edition, numbering seventy-eight pages,

presents many variations. A large portion of the 'Preface' was omitted, the text was considerably altered and it was enlarged by an Appendix consisting of a passage which formed part of Act IV, Scene 2 of *Osorio*, and had been published in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798, 1800, 1802 and 1805) as a separate poem entitled 'The Foster-Mother's Tale', and of a second passage, numbering twenty-eight lines, which was afterwards printed as a footnote to *Remorse*, Act, II, Scene 2, line 42 ('You are a painter, etc.'). The third edition was a reissue of the second and except for the statement on the title page it seems to differ in no respect from the second. According to J. D. Campbell (*Athenaeum*, April 1, 1896), there were three issues of the first edition, of which he had only seen the first; viz. (1) the normal text [Edition I]; (2) a second issue [Edition I (b) quoted by the Editor (R. H. Shepherd) of *Osorio*, 1877, as a variant of Act V, line 252]; (3) a third issue quoted by the same writer in his edition of *Poetical Works*, 1877-80, iii, 154-155 [Edition I (c)]. There is a copy of Edition I (b) in the British Museum: save in respect of Act V, line 252, it does not vary from Edition I. When Coleridge reprinted *Remorse* among his collected poems in 1828 and 1829, he omitted the Preface but retained the 'Appendix'. Two copies of *Remorse* annotated by Coleridge passed through the hands of E. H. Coleridge, (1) a copy of the First Edition presented to the Manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, J. G. Raymond (*MS. R.*), and (2) a copy of the Second Edition presented to Miss Sarah Hutchinson (*MS. H.*)<sup>21</sup>

We have referred briefly to the different versions of *Osorio* and *Remorse*. In this essay, however, we propose to confine ourselves to the two versions printed in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (two volumes, Vol. II, Oxford, 1912) edited by E. H. Coleridge

### III

The evolutionary process through which *Osorio* passed into *Remorse* — it took long sixteen years of rethinking and rewriting — sheds significant light on Coleridge's apprenticeship as a writer of an acting play. It also reveals Coleridge's thought processes while struggling in the sphere of an objective form of writing. Revisions, structurally, consist in changing the names of characters, the division of the play into Acts and Scenes,<sup>22</sup> rearrangement of scenes, and additions and omissions of scenes

and lines.<sup>23</sup> There is no doubt that *Remorse*, in its acting version,<sup>24</sup> is a product of different suggestions made by the professionals of Drury Lane. But it was after all Coleridge's mind that assimilated all these suggestions and it was his pen that gave shape to the stage version.

Three structural changes are of major significance. What strikes us immediately is the rearrangement made in the opening scene itself. In the opening scene in *Osorio*, Maria reaffirms her love for the absent and supposedly dead Albert. Velez vainly urges the case of his younger son, Osorio. Such a domestic and popular situation does not depend on history, but history is nonetheless put to service in the person of Alhadra, whose political significance is stressed in the play. She is a strong character, but her entrance is abrupt, and the result is a confusion of motives. As an exposition the opening scene does not quite serve the intended purpose: several themes are projected—the theme of love, a study in the psychology of a complex, rather warped character, the theme of religious persecution, and the theme of noble revenge—and these do not quite cohere. Alhadra is followed by Francesco, the inquisitor, and his appearance strikes as a jarring intrusion. When attention shifts back to Alhadra and she recites her tale of misery and violence, the disguised Albert wanders about talking to himself. His entrance cuts into the sombre mood produced by Alhadra's speech, and the weak introduction does not quite fit in with the intended note: "Three weeks have/I been loitering here, nor ever/Have summon'd up my heart to ask one question" (I, 247-48). The opening scene in *Remorse* integrates the antecedent action in such a way that it becomes quite clear and relevant, and it makes the original opening that now follows in the revised version well-knit into the plot for dramatic use. The speeches of the characters do not now sound so abrupt as they were in the original version because of their modification on significant occasions. As a result, the rhetoric, being compressed and refined, has some credibility. The new first scene shows Don Alvar, long thought as lost at sea, returning after an exile and conversing with his faithful attendant Zulimez on the coast of Granada. The conversation between Alvar and his faithful servant focuses attention on the play's chief motif and gives a firm conceptual orientation to the action: all other episodes are subsumed under and subordinated to this dominant theme.

The incantation episode was confusingly and undramatically used in *Osorio*. In this respect Donohue, Jr. rightly points out the inapposite use of this episode in the original version: "Osorio plans to have Albert masquerade as a Sorcerer and through magic reveal the portrait to Maria, so convincing her that Albert is dead. Albert's counterploy is to substitute for the portrait a picture he himself painted of the supposed assassination and so make Osorio aware that his nefarious scheme to get rid of his brother is somehow mysteriously known. But at this point, already enmeshed in psychological subtleties, Coleridge left the audience to guess which picture is actually introduced during the incantation scene . . ."<sup>25</sup> As a result, the episode fails to produce the necessary dramatic irony in Act III. The references to the portrait in *Osorio* really deepen the confusion. When the spell is muttered by Albert (III, line 105) with accompanying music, the 'whole orchestra crashes into one chorus' and the 'incense on the altar takes fire suddenly'. Maria says: "This is some trick — I know, it is a trick,/Yet my weak fancy, and these bodily creepings,/Would fain give substance to the shadow"<sup>26</sup> (III, lines 113-115). Velez now advances to the altar and remarks in a half-amused tone:

Hah !

A picture !

*Maria.* O God ! my picture ?

*Albert.* (*Gazing at Maria with wild impatient distressfulness.*)

Pale—pale—deadly pale !

*Maria.* He grasp'd it when he died. (III, 115-18)

Velez sportively says to Osorio: "You shall not see the picture, till you own it." Osorio replies: "This mirth and raillery, sir ! beseech your age./I am content to be more serious." (III, 148-50). In MS II Coleridge writes opposite this: "Velez supposes the picture is an innocent contrivance of Osorio's to remove Maria's scruples: Osorio, that it is the portrait of Maria which he had himself given the supposed Wizard."<sup>27</sup> We may also refer to Coleridge's marginal comment in MS III: "Velez supposes the picture which represents the attempt to assassinate Albert, to have been a mere invention contrived by Osorio with the most innocent intentions. Osorio supposes it of course to be the *portrait* of Maria which he had restored to Albert !"<sup>28</sup> As Coleridge himself notes, a scene of magic is introduced in which no single person on

the stage has the least faith.<sup>89</sup> Maria takes it as some kind of trick, Osorio believes that the picture is the portrait of Maria which he gave himself to the supposed Sorcerer, and Velez takes it as a pardonable contrivance. The absence of credibility weakens—or rather destroys—the intended suspense. There is also a confusion in regard to the picture, and it is not quite clear whether it is a portrait of Maria or a representation of the attempt to assassinate Albert. The following conversation of Osorio and Velez may be noted ;

*Osorio.* Where should I get her portrait ?

*Velez.* Get her portrait ?

Portrait ? You mean the picture I . . .

(III, 157-58)

And again :

*Osorio.* Come, father I you have taught me to be merry,  
And merrily we'll pore upon this picture.

*Velez* (*holding the picture before Osorio*). That Moor, who  
points his sword at Albert's breast—

(III, 232-34)

Osorio is amazed ("Dup'd—dup'd—dup'd I" III, 186) at the exposure. But the effect is not strong enough theatrically to arouse thrill in the audience.

In *Remorse* the scene marks a climactic moment in the process of discovery ; the music *clashes* into a chorus ("Wandering demons, hear the spell I / Lest a blacker charm compel" (III, i, 134-35), the incense on the altar takes fire suddenly, and an illuminated picture of Alvar's assassination is discovered ; having remained a few seconds it is then hidden by ascending flames. The whole thing is a deliberate contrivance, and yet the intended effect is not in the least impaired. The sense of mystery and the full horror of the revelation are poignantly conveyed by the words of Valdez in the next scene :

"That picture—Oh, that picture tells me all I/With a flash of light it came, in flames it vanished,/Self-kindled, self-consum'd : bright as thy life,/Sudden and unexpected as thy fate,/Alvar I My son I My son I..." (III, ii, 14—18).

Valdez says later that he was not deceived by these "magic sights", but in the dramatic context this seems to be an after-thought ; the immediate impact is of benumbing horror ("This was no feat of mortal agency", he says to Teresa), and this is in marked

contrast to his mocking tone in the earlier version. The contrast is marked equally in the impact on Ordonio. In the earlier version, Osorio is utterly dazed ("Where am I? 'Twas a lazy chilliness", III, 120); in *Remorse* we can trace clearly the convolutions of his thoughts:

Duped I duped I duped I—the traitor Isidore!

(III, i, 136)

His reaction ranges from momentary stupor to surprise, and the bitter exclamation "the traitor Isidore!" shows the violence of his feelings. He falls into stupor again and rouses himself into action only after Monviedro and the Familiars of the Inquisition attempt to seize the supposed Sorcerer. Alvar's chief intention was to awaken remorse in his brother; this purpose is not immediately fulfilled, but the drama gains in momentum. The scene in the earlier version was inchoate and discursive; the later version gains in clarity and concentration.

The scenes which follow Act III of *Remorse* are all instrumental in advancing the dramatic action and rendering the psychological progression of the chief character. The events introduced in Acts IV and V gradually but clearly unravel the knots and lead to clarification and resolution. Climax is reached more logically and, as Donohue, Jr., rightly says, "Coleridge has given additional thematic weight to the elicitation of remorse from the adamant soul of Ordonio".<sup>30</sup> What is important to note is that Ordonio is killed on the stage by Alhadra and not carried off stage by the Moors as in *Osorio*. Ordonio does not protest, his final resistance having broken down quite a long time ago. Thus the uncertainty and vagueness that hung over the finale of *Osorio* is replaced by a conclusive resolution in *Remorse*. This is an improvement from the dramatic point of view. Ordonio's killing by the vengeful widow of Isidore makes him see justice in his punishment for, when about to die, he is consoled to accept his death as "Atonement I" (V, i, 254). Alvar and Teresa are blessed by Valdez and his role in the concluding part of the play is now more meaningful than in *Osorio*.

By such curtailment and expansion Coleridge achieves much greater structural cohesion in the revised version. Two more significant instances are the omission of "The Foster-Mother's Tale" and the inclusion of an episode concerning a "poor idiot boy". The Foster Mother's account (included in *The Lyrical Ballads*, 1798)

of the adventures of a strange, heretical boy "who never loved to pray" (*Osorio*, IV, 198) and who lived and died among savages after escaping from the dungeon into which he was cast, has much poetical merit and has some bearing on the theme of religious persecution, but it is dramatically redundant and wisely deleted. Perhaps the professional actors and managers of Drury Lane advised the author to cut out this irrelevant episode.<sup>81</sup>

### Reference and Notes

1. See *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, in two volumes, Vol. II, (Oxford, 1912). P. 518n. This work will be subsequently referred to as *PW*, E.H. Coleridge, followed by page number. See also *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. James Dykes Campbell, London, 1909, pp. 64<sup>o</sup>-50, p. 479 (notes and footnotes). Campbell's edition will be hereafter referred to as *PW*. Campbell, followed by page number.
2. *PW*. Campbell, Mem., p. 479 (Appendix).
3. *PW*. E. H. Coleridge, p. 518n.
4. *Ibid*.
5. *Ibid*. See also *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, (Oxford, 1956), Vol. I, p. 358. Grigg's editions of Coleridge's letters will be subsequently referred to as *Letters*, Griggs, followed by volume number and page number.
6. *Letters*, Griggs, III, p. 14.
7. *Ibid*.
8. *Ibid*, I, p. 412.
9. See Joseph W. Donohue, Jr., *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age*, (Princeton, 1970). This work will be hereafter referred to as Donohue, Jr, followed by page number. The manner in which Coleridge acknowledges his debt to the Stage Manager, actors and actresses of Drury Lane confirms this view, ( See *PW*, E. H. Coleridge, pp. 814-15 and footnotes. )
10. *Letters*, Griggs, II, p. 745.
11. *Ibid*.
12. *Ibid*, III, p. 14.
13. *Ibid*.
14. *PW*. Campbell, p. lxxxvii (Introduction).
15. *Ibid*., p. lxxxvi (Introduction).
16. *Letters*, Griggs, III, p. 427 (Letters to John Rickman, January 25, 1813), Samuel J. Arnold and J. G. Raymond were connected in one way or another with the management of the Theatre Royal. Drury Lane (See Preface to *Remorse PW*. E. H. Coleridge, p. 814.)

17. *PW.* E. H. Coleridge, pp. 814-15 and footnotes.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 814-15.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 814.
20. *Letters.* Griggs, III, pp. 429-30. Coleridge was not pleased with the actor Alexander Rae who played Ordonio (*Letters*, Griggs, III, pp. 436-37 ; letter to Thomas Poole, Feb. 3, 1813). Elliston, a great comedian, played Alvar. This was a strange choice. ( See Leigh Hunt, *Dramatic Criticism*, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens, New York, 1946, p.95. ) But generous to a fault. Coleridge supported Elliston in his preface to *Remorse*. (See *PW.* E. H. Coleridge, p. 815.) The play ran for twenty nights. It was also acted in the provinces. (See *PW.* Campbell, Notes, p.650. )
21. See *PW.* E. H. Coleridge, p. 813n.

Apart from the slightly different issues of the first edition published from London, there were some American editions also. There were also 'prompt copies' of *Remorse*. These and the copies belonging to the stage manager were perhaps beyond the control of Coleridge. (See Carl Woodring, "Two prompt copies of *Remorse*", *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, LXV (April, 1961), pp. 229-35.
22. This clearly achieves greater theatrical effectiveness. *Osorio* is divided into Acts, and the change of scenes is less clearly marked.
23. We do not discuss here the Prologue furnished by Charles Lamb and Coleridge's Epilogue.
24. Perhaps the second edition was the acting version. (See *Athenæum*, June 25, 1892, p. 834.)
25. Donohue, Jr., p. 297.
26. In MS. II this speech is crossed out, and on the blank page opposite the following is written in Coleridge's hand :

Instead of Maria's portrait, Albert places on the altar a small picture of his attempted assassination. The scene is not wholly without poetical merit, but it is miserably undramatic, or rather untregic. A scene of magic is introduced in which no single person on the stage has the least faith—all, though in different ways, think or know it to be a trick .. (See *PW.* E. H. Coleridge, p. 55n.)
27. See *PW.* E. H. Coleridge, p. 556n.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, p.555.
30. Donohue, Jr., p. 298.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 297.



## SHELLEY'S INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

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B. C. DAS

SHELLEY'S 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' is a mystic experience. What is exactly meant by 'Intellectual beauty' by Shelley himself is almost beyond our analysis: it is a mixed feeling which can never be fully described by any emotional expression or intellectual dexterity. King-Hole calls it the 'beauty of the mind and of the soul'<sup>1</sup>; Shelley seems to relive the mood of *Tintern Abbey* among the Swiss Alps. It is an experience of a poet's or saint's life in a moment of trance. The beauty Shelley dreams of in such a mood is incorporeal beauty as opposed to physical beauty. "The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty was conceived during his voyage round the lake with Lord Byron."<sup>2</sup> But it did not come to Shelley all at once only at that time. In fact his boyhood interest in ghosts, devils and other occult and supernatural things, and his Platonic studies and his belief in the Godwinian perfectibility and other philosophical speculations gradually led him to divine vision of Love or Beauty. So Shelley's conception of Intellectual Beauty was born of diverse and complex feelings, and it is this that lured him all his life.

Caroline Spurgeon calls Shelley a love-mystic, but his dreamy temperament was at the same time streaked with a critical, reasoning faculty that enabled him even to analyse his rosy dreams. His best poems were, in a sense, 'maps of Shelley's unconscious';<sup>3</sup> the poet draws on the 'great memory' as Yeats calls it. As a psychological poet he conceives of 'the psyche-epipsyche strategy',<sup>4</sup> an ideal pattern towards which the mind aspires. So Shelley's romanticism "was a highly complex and usually an exceedingly unstable intellectual compound."<sup>5</sup> The ideas embodied in his 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' as in the lines: "Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate/With thy own hues all thou dost shine upon/Of human thought or form," are similar to those in *Phaedrus*. Shelley sees immanent and transcendental relationship between the intellectual and relative world. But it is to be remembered as evident from the *Symposium* that Shelley's approach to the Intellectual Beauty is more mystical and emotional than Plato's. His conception of Beauty is in fact biographical in origin. Noto-

poulos rightly says that in Shelley "we have an imaginative leap with little distinction between emotion and idea."<sup>6</sup> Though possessed of a reasoning faculty, he was more concerned with feeling, a feeling that outweighed the Platonic 'use of reason'. Again, it is true to say that Shelley could "apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling".<sup>7</sup>

Shelley believes, like Plato, in the Ultimate Reality that lies behind the visible world. To him the physical world is only a shadow of a Power that shines upon the face of every object. It is the peculiar function of a poet or a mystic to seize upon the reflections of the Divine Mind on earth. Shelley had a vision of Love or Beauty that enticed him now and then into "a height of love's rare Universe."<sup>8</sup> It is this vision that prompted him from his very boyhood to dedicate his whole life to the worship of beauty. King-Hole observes that Shelley had his mental crisis, his days of unrest, during 1813-16; his bewildered mind found a substitute for God in the Intellectual Beauty that caused in him the intensest possible degree of excitement and subsequently refreshed, consoled and calmed him.

"For Shelley Love, which was also Beauty, was something to be pursued on two planes, the one abstract and universal and the other concrete and earthly".<sup>9</sup> He attempted to overcome 'the monsters of his thought' to enter into the rarefied atmosphere and to have a direct vision of the Ultimate Reality, and sought at the same time an 'Ariadne' "who should embody the qualities of the universal love in her earthly Woman-love and by it be his guide to the universal."<sup>10</sup> He always tried to find in woman a spiritual consort, a prototype of ideal beauty and love. The Platonic idea was always at the back of his mind and therefore a man's ideal mate is, according to him, his other self or the other-half of his own soul. The beloved is called 'the soul of my soul' by Shelley; she remains in all her glory at the shining core of his soul but she is always veiled. The 'veiled maid' of *Alastor* wears a shroud of mystery and proves an irresistible lure to Shelley. Ideal Beauty is seen by him in glimpses only; "It visits with inconstant glance/Each human heart and countenance;"<sup>11</sup> yet its divine light alone "gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream!"<sup>12</sup> No earthly woman incarnates the ideal love fully. After a weary search the poet concludes: "One is always in love with something or other; the error—and I confess, it is not easy for spirits

caused in flesh and blood to avoid it—consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal."<sup>13</sup> Though sprung from physical desire, Shelley's ideal beauty or love dissolves into an abstraction at its final stage, a stage of spiritual experience that enabled Keats to 'enter into fellowship with Essence' or made Yeats utter: "My body of a sudden blazed; . . . It seemed, so great my happiness, / that I was blessed and could bless".<sup>14</sup>

'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' expresses a sense of pain along with the indescribable glory; it seems to have been composed painfully by the poet as he is allowed only an 'inconstant wing' and no steady vision of Beauty. Hence Shelley's agonised cry,— 'Depart not — lest the grave should be / Like life and fear, a dark reality'.<sup>15</sup> In *Mont Blanc* he feels that the cosmic mind passes, as it were, through his own, and a portion of its beauty is retained in him. "Some say that gleams of a remoter world / Visit the soul in sleep":<sup>16</sup> It is a state which is a 'vision or a waking dream'; it is the meeting point of his normal life self and the greater self. When his mind is on fire he comes to have a transcendental or supernatural experience, an experience of his anti-self or antithetical self as Yeats calls it. Shelley was thus aware of "the interpenetration of a diviner nature"<sup>17</sup> through his own. "We dimly see", says Shelley, "within our intellectual nature a miniature, as it were, of our entire self"<sup>18</sup>. In an ecstatic state the poet saw the vision of the 'glorious One', the Ultimate Beauty beyond the phenomenal world, which inspired him to write a kind of poetry which was "a sword of lightning, even unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it."<sup>19</sup> To him Love and Beauty meant one and the same thing to be pursued on two different planes, earthly and spiritual. In most of his love poems the mortal 'Ariadne' becomes his guide to the Universal love. Therefore he always tried to mingle Divine Love and its human symbol together.

The Platonic philosophy as understood by him was experimented even in real life with Harriet, Hitchener, Mary and others. The poet's thirst for 'an intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself' was never quenched. His romantic agony as expressed in his 'Alastor', 'The Witch of Atlas' and 'The Sensitive Plant' etc. may be attributed to a sense of unfulfilment of his dreams. The ideas of the Intellectual Beauty he derived from the Platonic and the Neo-Platonic sources were responsible for his best poems. His personal

experience mingled with his philosophical concepts and touched them up with a mystical, emotional and biographical flavour. Sometimes he felt elated to heights of 'Beauty itself', pure Intellectual Beauty.

He was haunted from his early days by 'something far more deeply interfused' as experienced by Wordsworth : this 'Spirit of Nature' or the 'Universal Soul' seemed to him to be full of 'power and virtue' and manifest itself as Intellectual Beauty. But "the divine nature cannot immediately communicate with what is human but all the intercourse and converse which is conceded by the gods to men, both whilst they sleep and when they wake, subsists through the intervention of Love<sup>20</sup> who is one of the demons". The soul of Shelley participates in the demonical nature and leaves therefore a spiritual suggestion in his love poetry.

Again, Love possesses, according to Shelley, a totally opposite nature and has in it some sordid qualities as expressed on the human plane : "When two hearts have once mingled, / Love first leaves the well-built nest ; / The weak one is singled / To endure what it once possessed<sup>21</sup>". A destructive element or a sense of torture is also there in Shelley's poetry. But our mortal nature seeks, so far as it is able, to become deathless and eternal. This instinct coupled with the Neo-platonic idea of immortality of the soul drove him to rise at last to see a vision of Intellectual Beauty. The Platonists believe that the intellectual principle quitting the human body immediately attaches itself to an aerial form which becomes its vehicle. The region of woman-love thus transcended, the human mind in a beatific vision can see Love or Beauty itself. In a moment of ecstasy the body also blazes up and gets lost in some sort of conflagration in which woman-love and demon-love become one as expressed in his *Epipsychidion*. Shelley's demon of love journeys both ways linking the earthly Ariadne with the divine one. Therefore Shelley's Intellectual Beauty is not wholly an uncritical romantic vision but a signature of man's complex feeling rooted to the unconscious.

Love is equated with Beauty by Shelley, and his love for earthly women was not of little significance. In fact the real power of his poetry lies in his love for women real and imaginary. Diverse themes of love are woven in his poetry to create a unity ; his childhood visions of an object of love matured at last into pure abstract beauty which is attained in *Adonais*. All his women who

happened to rouse a sense of worship or admiration in him fell sooner or later short of his mental image of perfection and "security might perhaps be found in a transcendental love, a love of permanence, not failing and wounding like human love—and of supreme beauty".<sup>22</sup> The divine beauty as conceived by Shelley shines upon the face of every woman of his love poetry: the 'veiled maid' of *Alastor*, 'fair Shape' or 'a Form fairer than tongue can speak' in *The Revolt of Islam*, *The Witch of Atlas*, the Lady of the *Sensitive Plant* etc. embody the same abstract spirit of Beauty that enticed Shelly all his life. His search culminates in respect of pure beauty in *Adonais*, and only once in *Epipsychidion* his human symbol of love blends with the heavenly prototype. Emilia is now to the poet 'Seraph of Heaven I too gentle to be human, / Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman / All ... of light and love and immortality';<sup>23</sup> she is 'Wonder', Beauty and Terror I and yet she is to the poet 'A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight'; all earthly and heavenly qualities find the aptest expression in her. Shelley runs after the Reality beyond the veil, a Reality, though glimpsed in moments of ecstasy, fades away, and the poet sends out an agonised cry: "I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!" Shelley knows at heart that Love or Beauty that lures him in his 'visioned wanderings' can never be fully realised in mortal flesh.

Keats's soul completely detached from body becomes a portion of that divine Loveliness as envisaged by Shelley in his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. As it has transcended the region of mortality and entered into the fellowship with the Essence, it serves as a beacon light of pure Intellectual Beauty. Keats's 'spirit stripped of its body in new naked freedom' merges, in the One, the Universal Spirit of Love or Beauty. Shelley's philosophic speculation reaches the highest level of thought in the following lines:

The One remains, the many change and pass;  
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;  
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,  
Until Death tramples it to fragments.

To Shelley mortal death is the gateway to truth but life itself is of much meaning and significance to him. He is at once in love with the world and the One; he seems to hold fast both 'phases of spirit'. His mind may be more preoccupied with 'the white radiance of Eternity', though stained by life, than with diverse colours but

the staining, as Harold Bloom puts it, "is not all loss, for the dome produces the colors that Eternity merely subsumes".<sup>24</sup> His attitude to Love, therefore, shows a complex character. It is rightly observed by some of the critics that Shelley finally is working to relate the agonies of existence to the one invulnerable positive, 'the nature's naked loveliness of Adonis' ! Shelley could very well rise from the earthly plane to 'the love's rare Universe' and also come down with grace and beauty, 'virtue and power' to 'illuminate' the human soul. The conflict between woman love and divine love and between time and eternity was always there in his mind. A sense of struggle in his soul crossing the 'intermediate space from the earth or going down from an abstract region through it to the earth again, is quite evident in his poetry. In other words his inspired soul journeys upward and downward to effect a unity, a harmony between earth and heaven. This participation in the demonical nature enabled Shelley to gaze at a 'Form' Indescribable, which may be called Intellectual Beauty.

It is a grievous mistake to dismiss Shelley as a mere 'ethereal singer' or as an angel waving his luminous wings in the void. He is a love-mystic ; he knows of some mysteries which are always beyond human comprehension. The experience that 'flesh must fade for heaven was here' comes in a greater or lesser degree to all poets of love. Rogers observes that Shelley sometimes reaches a stage of transfiguration in which all his symbols— isle, boat, Ariadne etc. signify a unique feeling of love, run into one another and become one : the lover in *Epipsychidion* says :

Let us become. . .

The living soul of this Elysian isle

Conscious inseparable one. . .

The poet's soul swims into 'realms where air we breathe is Love'. The veil is now torn open and the abstract beauty steadfast amid change and decay bursts on his soul. Intellectual Beauty is glimpsed by Shelley when the Reality beyond the veil melts into reality such as we know on earth ; it is to Shelley the One Spirit that "wields the world with never wearied love, / Sustains it from beneath and kindles it above".<sup>25</sup>

Shelley's conception of Intellectual Beauty owes a great deal to Plato's *Symposium* but his personal, complex feelings and experiences of love go a long way to make up the sum. "Love was", says Symonds, "the root and basis of his nature : this love first

developed as domestic affection, next as friendship, then as a youth's passion, now began to shine with steady lustre as an all-embracing devotion to his fellowman".<sup>26</sup> Shelley had always a tendency to idealise love as a 'vision and faculty divine' but it was never totally divorced from physical beauty. And only when he felt transfigured, abstracted from the world, he saw 'the awful shadow of some unseen power', the image of the Intellectual beauty.

Modern critics like Leavis, Richards, T. S. Eliot etc. are rather hard on Shelley. They accuse him of unsubstantiality or abstractness of his poetry which fails for that reason, according to them, to appeal to modern sensibility. Sometimes we really get lost in the rainbow-coloured mist of Shelley's dream world. But we should remember here a note by Mrs. Shelley on *Prometheus Unbound* that "it requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem".<sup>27</sup> It is true of his poetry as a whole. Frederick Pottle, an eminent modern critic, while agreeing with the hostile group, concludes that "it is a necessary and laudable task to show the limitations of Shelley's poetry by measuring it against modern sensibility. But ( I would maintain ) it is equally necessary and laudable to expose the limitations of modern sensibility by measuring it against Shelley's poetry".<sup>28</sup>

It was frankly admitted by W. B. Yeats that his life was in fact shaped by Shelley, and his Intellectual Beauty, though found inadequate and uncritical later, inspired his first plays and early poetry. Judged by Yeats's 'antinomial aesthetic', Shelley's Intellectual Beauty seemed to lack a vision of evil, and therefore was suspected of false creativity by Yeats. And yet his interest in Shelley for over sixty years, as observed by Bornstein,<sup>29</sup> was 'almost an obsession'. Yeats's 'Rose', though suggestive of multiple meaning and of more complexity, sprang in fact from Shelley's ideas of love and beauty. Therefore Shelley's poetry is fascinating not only to moderns but also to future generations. We feel like switching off our so-called 'critical intelligence' just to steal a look at his Intellectual Beauty, for the ultimate effect of it is always peace, a sort of blessed illumination of the soul.

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## CROCE'S THEORY ON ART.

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JOGESH CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA

### I

BENEDETTO Croce (1866—1952) has probably been the greatest single figure in modern European Aesthetics and as such no discussion on the principles in art creation can be complete without a reference to his epoch-making theory of Art as Intuition. His conclusions may not always be acceptable to all, but there is no denying the forcefulness of his arguments, the intense vigour of his style, and the ruthlessness with which he usually drives his point home to the reader. The principles enunciated by him exercised a deep and all-pervasive influence on literary criticism during his lifetime, and it continues even after his death in November, 1952.

The most important work in which Croce's theory of Aesthetic gained its first complete and rounded expression was his *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* which appeared first in 1900 in the form of a communication to the Accademia Pontiana of Naples, Vol. XXX. The first edition of the book is dated 1902. Then came his *Problems of Aesthetic* (1910), *New Essays in Aesthetic* (1920), *The Essence of Aesthetic* (1921), and last, though not least, his article in the 14th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. I (pp. 263—271) which was a splendid summary of his contribution to the field of Aesthetics. He also applied his critical theories in practices in his discussion on some of the great masters of literature in his books *Ariosto*, *Shakespeare and Corneille*, *The Poetry of Dante* and *Goethe*. Although Benedetto Croce was a voluminous writer, our concern in the present paper is only with his enunciation of the aesthetic theory and as such *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (often named simply *Aesthetic*) is our main centre of reference.

Croce approaches Art as an inevitable activity of the human spirit which expresses itself in two distinct kinds of activity: knowledge or theoretical activity, and Will or Practical activity: Knowledge, again, has two forms: Intuitive and Intellective. Will, too, manifests itself in Useful or Economic Will, and Moral or

Ethical Will. These four, according, to Croce, exhaust the spiritual forms. They are distinct but fundamental gradations of the human spirit which cannot again be sub-divided. The errors and the false theories of Art derive from the confusion of one of these forms with the others. It is only when we can keep our minds clear about the nature of each of these forms that the true theory of Aesthetic will be revealed to us.

Art, says Croce, is intuition which is Expression. Intuition is that spiritual activity which produces images and not concepts. It is the first and most essential activity of the human spirit on which all other activities are dependent. All Art is intuition, since Art gives us knowledge of things in their concretion and individuality. "Intuition" has been taken by Croce as synonymous with Expression, and as such has been differentiated from mere sensation which is formless matter. It is only when Matter attacked and conquered by Form gives place to concrete Form that we have an Intuition. Form is the spiritual activity which works upon a mere sensation, a vague stirring of the mind. The word "Form" must, however, be clearly understood in Croce's sense; otherwise we will not be able to follow him when he speaks of Art as Form. To put it in the words of the philosopher himself: "It is the matter, the content, that differentiates one of our intuitions from another: form is constant: it is spiritual activity, while matter is changeable"\* (Aesthetic: p. 9) Matter, however, is essential, for how can otherwise our spiritual activity leave its abstraction, and become concrete? That which, therefore, does not objectify itself in Expression is not Intuition. Intuitive activity possesses Intuitions only to the extent that it expresses them. If Art, then, is Intuition, it is Expression and nothing but Expression.

An objection may arise that all Art may be Intuition, but how can we say that Intuition is always Art? Do we then make no difference between mere speaking and work of Art? Croce says, qualitatively there is none. The two belong to the same category: both are Expression. The only difference is a quantitative one. A work of Art collects intuitions that are wider and more complex than those which we experience in common than those which we experience in common speech. Art, like all other human expressions, is the expression of impressions, not the expression of expressions.

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\*Douglas Ainslie's translation (Macmillan & Co., Ltd, 1909)

The aesthetic or the intuitive form is altogether independent of the intellectual, but the latter cannot stand without the former. Knowledge by concepts, the intellectual activity of the spirit, is nothing but knowledge of relations of things, and those things are intuitions. Concepts, thus, are not possible without intuitions. As Croce says : To speak, is not to think logically ; but to think logically is, at the same time, to speak (not necessarily articulately). Sometimes we say that we have thought without the expression ; but according to Croce, we would properly say that we have the expression, but in a form that is not easy of special communication. Every scientific work is also a work of art. The aesthetic side may remain little noticed in the midst of the intellectual effort to follow the thoughts of the man of science, but it will still be inevitably there.

Croce includes History under the universal concept of Art. It does not construct universals and abstractions, but posits intuitions. The distinction between the content of history and that of Art is secondary. The only difference between pure imagination and historicity is in the element of memory. History is not Science, for historical certainty is composed of memory and of authority, not of analyses and of demonstration. History therefore has been described by Croce as "the product of Intuition placed in contact with the concept, i. e., of art receiving in itself philosophic distinctions, while remaining concrete and individual." (*Ibid.*, p. 52.)

The true Science, according to Croce, is Philosophy, and not the empirical sciences. Science deals with concept, with universality and not individuality, with what is universal in reality. In this sense, true science can never be anything but a science of the Spirit, i. e., Philosophy.

After defining the true nature of Art, History and Logic, Croce points out the mistakes which arise from our constant confusion between Aesthetic and History, between Aesthetic and Logic. Thus, *the theory of verisimilitude* when it means historical credibility is an instance of history encroaching upon the domain of Art or Pure Intuition which has nothing to do with historical truth. One of the examples of Logic being confused with Aesthetic is *the theory of the typical* which affirms that Art should make the species shine in the individual. Art deals with things in their concretion and individuality. It is, therefore, wrong to attribute a characteristic of the intellectual to Art. If Don Quixote is taken as a type, of whom is

he a type, but of himself? He is not a type of abstract concepts, such as the loss of the Sense of reality, or of the love of glory, because a great many men may be thought of under these concepts, who are not Don Quixote. Another striking instance of an intellectualist error given by Croce is *the theory of artistic and literary classes*. Such divisions of literature and Art have certainly their empirical value, but the weight of a scientific definition should not be attached to them. Each work of Art is an individual inexpressible by Logic. It cannot be resolved into universals and abstractions. The error can be known from the fact that every true work of art has violated some established class, and has thus compelled the critics to enlarge the number of classes.

Confusions have entered the regions of History and Logic also. Thus attempt has been made to write the philosophy of history or an ideal history, sociology and historical psychology. People have tried to extract from history, universal laws and concepts. But how can there be historical laws and historical concepts? History means concretion and individuality, whereas law and concept mean abstraction and universality.

Aesthetic has so invaded the domain of Logic that the logical treatises are simply full of a haphazard mixture of verbal facts and facts of thought, of Aesthetic and Logic. The only truly logical propositions (i. e., aesthetic-logical) can be nothing but those whose proper and exclusive content is the determination of a concept. The theory of the Syllogistic has certainly its utility as a way of controlling one's own thought and of criticising that of others. But in true Logic, i. e., in philosophical Logic, the doctrine of the concept must be the central and dominating doctrine. Logic proper must get rid of an undue influence of the Aesthetic; it must get rid of single and particular concepts.

Side by side with the theoretic form, the Spirit, according to Croce, has its practical form, viz., Will, which is productive, not of knowledge, but of actions. Action is really action, in so far as it is voluntary. Croce makes it quite clear that in the Will to do is also included the Will to resist and reject. This practical form of the Spirit is dependent upon the theoretic form of knowledge.

Will is not within Aesthetic; it is outside and beside it, and though they are often found united, they are not necessarily united. The work of Art is always internal, and that which is called external is no longer a work of Art. The true artist may

not at all will a communication of his expression. Since this is so, true Art is practically innocent. If we speak of Art as Art, the search for an end of Art becomes ridiculous. Art is completely innocent of the practical forms of the spirit : the useful and the moral, and thus the question of a choice of content in Art becomes an impossibility. It is only in this sense that one can justify the expression : Art for Art's sake.

From the above point of view, both absolutists and relativists are partially right. The absolutists are right in saying that they can judge of the beautiful. But they are wrong in conceiving of the beautiful as of something placed outside the aesthetic activity. Relativists are right in proclaiming that every art can be judged only in itself. But they believe that the aesthetic expression is similar to the pleasant and the unpleasant which everybody feels in his own way. The criterion of taste, says Croce, is absolute ; but it is absolute with the intuitive absoluteness of the imagination, and in no other way. Nevertheless, variety of judgements is an indisputable fact. Reproduction takes place only if the physical stimulus as well as the psychological conditions present at the time of production do not change. But they do change. It is for this reason that restorations and historical interpretation of works of Art do not always succeed, or are not completely successful. But still, to follow our philosopher, "the unsurmountable is only accidentally present, and cannot cause us to fail to recognise the favourable results which are nevertheless obtained".

## II

The great contribution of Benedetto Croce in our days of extreme realism in his treatment of Art on an idealistic plane. This has shorn Art of all merely utilitarian purposes and thus condemns all attempts at making it just a handmaiden of propaganda. The theory of Rasa in Sanskrit Poetics also recognises this ideal character of Art. But admitting this general ideal plane of art-creation, we must beg to differ from some of the statements of Croce.

For one thing, Croce speaks of the indivisibility of the four grades of the human spirit. So he does not allow the division of literature of Art into categories like the tragic and the comic, for example. But, following his own argument we might say that the human spirit, too, is one and indivisible. So, the division of the spiritual activity into four grades is also unwarranted. And if this division be allowed for its utility, why should not there be the other

sub-divisions? Croce himself admits that the four grades of the spirit constantly intermingle. Of course, he serves as a corrective to the endless and foolish ramifications of works of Art. And, to that extent, he is right.

Secondly, communication has been described by Croce as a purely physical and practical business and as such it does not belong to aesthetic activity. But works of Art have always come down to us with what Croce calls this physical side. Without communication we should never know that there was an Intuition in the artist's mind. Hence the complete process of art-production is to be considered as Aesthetic. We are not ready to call an Intuition unexpressed in words by the name of Poetry. It must be articulate. Tagore wants to say the same thing when he is not prepared to call a silent poet (if such a thing were possible) a poet at all. Of course, Croce tells us that unless feelings in this artist's mind have taken a definite form, they cannot be termed Intuition, and once there is intuition, once there is something more systematic than a vague stirring of the mind, it must come out. But, taking Croce at his own words, we must then consider communication as an integral part of the artistic production. It is in communication that the aesthetic process becomes complete.

Croce who takes Art as *Sui Generis* has we find, accepted Art for the sake of life when he says that at the time of the activity of externalization the artist cannot but be influenced by Economic and Moral considerations. The artist, externalizing his intuition must perform his duty as a social man. But Art proper, says Croce, is innocent of any extraneous influences. But we have already noted externalization as an essential factor of artistic production and thus the artist is indirectly bound by his social consciousness. Croce himself does not allow a Freudian interpretation of Art. But why not, we may ask, by following Croce's own theory, the artist's intuition might come that way?

Croce himself admits the usefulness of the empirical distinctions of Art. He also admits that the aesthetic is always accompanied by the intellectual, ethical and the economic elements (*Aesthetic* chapter XIV). The dualism between physical and aesthetic facts, according to him, is non-existent in the works of Art which come down to us. In chapter XV, again, Croce admits that certain given artistic intuitions have need of definite physical means for their

reproduction. Once more we see that the importance of activity of externalization can never be minimised.

But, the most fundamental point where we beg to differ from Croce is his belief that every work of Art is incomparable and contains within itself its proper perfection. Once we accept this view, we are left with no standard for the judgement of values in Art. A piece of literature, in the opinion of Croce, is either Art or not Art according to its success or failure. He seems to have drawn this corollary from his theory of the identity of Form and Matter we can still maintain a distinction between good Art and great Art, because the greater Art will be greater by virtue of both Form and Matter which will still remain identical with each other. As soon as the weight of the content increases, the Form increases correspondingly. Walter Pater, though subscribing to the view of Art for Art's sake in his earlier writings, came over to recognise the distinction between good Art and great Art in his essay on Style (*Appreciations*, pp. 34-35). After all the value of a work of Art is ultimately determined by its human interest. Detached from life, Art becomes an abstraction; for it grows out of life and draws from life. However much the real life may be transformed by the artist's personality, it still remains the starting point; and the ultimate goal of Art is also to contribute to the enrichment of human life. This is what is meant by Arnold when he describes poetry as "criticism of life". For the lower animals, the mere 'is' of life suffices. But human beings are not always satisfied with life as it is; they also think of life as it ought to be. That is why Art embodies active human reactions to life, and ultimately the value of a work of Art is always determined by the degree to which it enriches life. Pater recognises this when he speaks of the greater dignity of interests of a great work of Art. If we deny the judgement of values in Art, a doggeral verse good in itself might then be as good as *Hamlet*.

Croce allows greater complexity to the greater works of Shakespeare. The complexity, however, may not at all be quantitative, it must have a necessary reference to quality. It is because some works of Shakespeare have a greater human interest than the others, because they have a greater bearing of life, and because they set us thinking about the multifarious questions embedded in the human flesh and thus raise us up for the time being from our circumscribed existence of day-to-day life, that they are great. It is by this great human interest that the value of a work of Art will always be determined in the final analysis. And it is here that we must part company with Benedetto Croce.

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## LOVE POEMS OF A. H. CLOUGH

ARUN KUMAR DATTA

### I

Philip, the poet and the radical intellectual in Clough's 'The Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich', is at a loss to explain to his friends his feelings about a capless bonnetless maiden bending with a three-pronged fork in a garden uprooting potatoes :

Was it the air ? Who can say ? or herself,  
or the charm of labour ?

But a new thing was in me, and longing  
delicious possessed me,

Longing to take her and lift her and put  
her away from her slaving. (*Poems*, p.123)

This is a difficult question for Philip, but it suggests his approach to love very clearly. His vague desire to serve a simple, dutiful village girl is 'chivalry semi-quixotic', 'the old knightly religion'—service rendered to fellow human beings. To him, the maiden is

Unto the mystery's end sole helpmate  
meet to be with him. (*Poems*, p 124)

The idea is taken up in the 'Clergyman's First Tale ; which has 'love is fellow-service' as its sub-title, in 'Mari Magno'. Love binds Edmund and Emma to work together and aim at a higher kind of life.

We shall behold a something we have done,  
Shall of the work together we have wrought,  
Beyond our aspiration and our thought,  
Some not unworthy issue yet receive

For love is fellow, service I believe. (*Poems*, 1895 p.359)

Claude, the cold intellectual, in 'Amours de Voyage', regrets that he cannot find 'a help meet' for him and his failure is due to an ambivalent mood. He writes to his friend Eustace about Mary Trevellyn,

I am In love, you declare. I think not so ;  
yet I grant you

It is a pleasure indeed to converse  
with this girl. (*Poems*, p.195)



But his attitude to love is a part of his much broader attitude to life. Life is imperfect on earth. It is perfect in heaven and the ideal is to attain this perfection, an Absolute. Love and marriage are but temporary arrangements in which women help men to pass time and forget their problems.

She is but for a space, an ad-interim  
solace and pleasure,——

That in the end she shall yield to a  
perfect absolute something. (*Poems*, p.203)

Dipsychus, the most deeply intellectual of Clough's characters, sounds sceptical when forced to make up his mind about love as a measure to resolve all his mental conflicts.

But love, the large repose  
Restorative, not to mere outside needs  
Skin-deep, but throughly to the total man,  
Exists, I will believe, but so, so rare,  
So doubtful, so exceptional, hard to guess.

(*Poems*, p. 270)

That love is an inadequate help against 'bemaddening discords of the mind' and 'vexed conundrums of life' is emphasized in one of Clough's letters to Miss B. Smith, later on, Mrs Clough.

Love is not everything, Blanche ; don't believe  
it, nor try to make me pretend to believe it.  
Service is everything. Let us be fellow-servants.

(*The Correspondence*, Vol. I, p. 300)

Similar sentiments about love as companionship and having limited scope are expressed in another letter to the same person.

We are companions — the fellow-labourers — to the  
end of our journey here, and then it will not have  
been in vain ; we shall still be something, I think,  
to each other . . . There, that is my creed . . .

(*The Correspondence*, Vol. I, p 301)

To understand Clough's love poems in the light of his creed is to accept him as an intellectual poet. Although he takes a sceptical view of love, he is never a cynic. He believes, that ideal love, though rare, has immense possibilities. It is not just physical urge or mental obsession. It is inspired by deep moral and spiritual impulses. The American in *The American's Tale* in 'Mari Magno' has made the point when he comments :

Love begins not when lovers meet and kiss ;

They were intended for each other's bliss

When souls began. (*Poems*/ 1951, 11 48-50 p. 342-43)

The young man in 'Nature Naturans' fails to give a precise answer to

From her to me, from me to her,

What passed so subtly stealthily I (*Poems*, p. 36)

He submits himself to a 'sensation strange', 'emotions too too sweet', and a 'power' which makes them 'fused in one'. Only at the end of the poem does he venture to suggest the 'mystic name of Love' to experience embracing and affecting his body, mind and soul.

An ideal wife, according to Hobbes in 'The Bothie', combines in her qualities of the body and mind on the one hand with those of the spirit on the other. He refers to this duality when he writes :

One part heavenly-ideal, the other

vulgar and earthy (*Poems*, p. 174)

This again forms the main point in Clough's interpretation of Rachel-Lean story in 'Jacob's Wives'. Such a love is ennobling, tempered with and enduring.

Reason sublimed and love most high

It was, a life that cannot die,

A dream of glory most exceeding. (*Poems*, p. 6)

It is, as illustrated in "The Clergyman's Second Tale" and "The Lawyer's Second Tale" in 'Mari Magno', based on mutual respect understanding and involves duty and responsibility. It consoles and reassures lovers in moments of stress and strain.

The mere assurance that she lives

And loves me, full contentment gives ;

I need not doubt, despond or fear,

For, she is there, and I am here. (*Poems*, p. 100)

Clough views marriage as a union of two distinct personalities each contributing towards happiness in its own way. This marriage bond is sacred and has God's blessings. Any moral deviation attracts physical and mental suffering but is forgiven at last. This has been the poet's intention in some of the tales in 'Mari Magno', 'The Bothie' and 'Jacob's Wives'. Again, true love, in Clough's opinion, can never be selfish and mean. Endymion's love for the moon, for him, is an example of personal love turned universal brotherhood.

O my brothers I men, my brothers,

You are mine and I am yours,

I am yours to cheer and succour  
 I am yours for hope and aid. (*Poems*, p. 47).

Quite obviously, this kind of love transcends barriers of time and space. In spite of their physical separation, the lovers feel that they meet each other every hour.

Each dawning day my eyelids see  
 You come, methinks, across to me  
 And I, at every hour anew,  
 I start to fly to bliss and you. (*Poems*, p. 103)

The position of lovers is reversed in Arnold who looks upon separation as an inevitable, love as a preordination, and despair an essential ingredient in it.

Yes I in the sea of life enisled,  
 With echoing straits between us thrown.  
 Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
 We mortal millions live *alone*.

(*Arnold's Poems*, p. 182)

The king of the sea in 'The Forsaken Merman' bewails his loss.

There dwells a loved one,  
 But cruel is she I  
 She left lonely for ever

The kings of the sea. (*Arnold's Poems*, p. 165)

Human beings are so different from one another by nature that ideal love, 'true affinities of soul' leading to gentleness, tranquillity and peace, is never achieved. So the truth about love is that :

Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone,  
 (*Arnold's Poems*, p. 182)

Which is a providential mandate that human lovers cannot but accept.

A God, a God their severance ruled.

(*Arnold's Poems*, p. 182)

With Arnold, as with Clough, love on earth is necessarily imperfect.

How vain a thing is mortal love. (*Arnold's Poems*, p. 181)

Women seek in those they love 'stern strength, and promise of control' and not kindness and gentleness ; but men, although they wish it otherwise, are swayed by strong emotions too strange, too restless, too untamed. As a result, they suffer from a lack of proper understanding. But there is ample compensation for this in heaven where lovers will free from 'pride and guile' far away from

the wild earth of hate and fear.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,  
May then more neighbouring courses ply ;  
May to each other be brought near,  
And greet across infinity. (*Arnold's Poems*, p. 180)

Browning shares the view of imperfect love with Clough and Arnold but with a difference. To him love is imperfect because it is short-lived. But it is as satisfying within its limits as perfect love. The difference between them is one of degree and not of kind. The lovers have no illusion about the nature of their love, nor do they ask for any further happiness. The intensity of living and loving at a point of time provides them with sublimation.

What if we still ride on, we two  
With life for ever old yet new,  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity——

(*'The Last Ride Together'*)

The lover in 'Cristina' responds to the loving glance of his lady-love instantly and feels that their souls have intermingled. It does not matter if she cares for him any longer. He is deeply absorbed in his present experience and considers it intense enough to last his whole life.

Such am I ; the secret's mine now !  
She has lost me, I have gained her ;  
Her soul's mine : and thus, grown perfect,  
I shall pass my life's remainder.  
Life will just hold out the proving  
Both our powers, alone and blended ;  
And then, come next life quickly !  
This world's use will have been ended.

Browning with all his belief that our life in heaven is an extension of our life on earth attaches more importance to the realities of love, to the fullest possible realisation of the instant, but the consideration of a life beyond in relation to perfect love gets much more prominence in Clough.

One of the ideals which Tennyson has set for King Arthur, his hero, in 'The Idylls of the King' is

To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
Until they own her. (*Guinevere*)

King Arthur marries Guinevere believing that she will be :

Lo mine helpmate. one to feel

My purpose and rejoicing in my joy. (Guinevere)

But the purpose of King Arthur's life is spoilt when Queen Guinevere becomes faithless and immoral. Princess Ida in 'The Princess', at first, suffers, from an exaggerated view of woman's rights and this causes a lot of unhappiness to all concerned. Happiness is restored only when she is married to her betrothed, the Prince. This becomes possible when Princess Ida accepts that man and woman grow to be

The single pure and perfect animal,

The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke, life.

(*'The Princess'*)

Nature has created them as distinct individualities but complementary to one another. Woman in such a world is neither equal nor unequal to man. It will be a fatal mistake to rob her of distinctiveness or to force her to behave in a way unnatural for her. As they live together over the years, they partake of one another's qualities. Once the personalities blend and the proper understanding between them is arrived at, man and woman will attain perfect happiness and give birth to a superior kind or human race on earth. Tennyson's overall concerns are with man and woman in this life and their moral behaviour. Clough has nothing about the effect of this moral behaviour that may run counter to Tennyson's views, but he raises grave doubts about the fundamental question of perfect understanding between man and woman.

## II

It has already been pointed out that there is a tension between ideal love and real love in Clough. Indeed any consideration of Clough's treatment of love should take both these aspects into account. The metaphor of fire which rids lovers of impurities suggests the ennobling power of love. The first flush of love, excitement, thrill, its freshness and richness are expressed through piled metaphors and symbols drawn from the flora and fauna in 'Natura Naturans'. The unifying all-embracing quality of love which makes co-existence of the poor and the rich possible, all contributing towards happiness, is suggested by the simile of sunlight in 'The Bothie'. Similar nature of love as providing

nourishment to all, down to the poorest member of society and rising above selfishness and pettiness is implied by the simile of the growth of a tree in the same poem. Ideal love has also been compared to a restorative, a health-improving medicine in 'Dipsychus'. Marriage as a merging of two distinct personalities and the necessity for moral sanction behind it are suggested by the simile of the construction of the key stone over which a bridge has to be laid out very carefully at last.

Paradoxically enough, Clough is aware at the same time that perfect love denies realization and defies understanding. This is conveyed through the metaphor of a star reflected on the muddy water of a river. The irony of love is expressed by the visual image of a queen on the throne claimed by a Jew in 'Dipsychus'. The contradiction between imperfect love on earth and man's wilful submission to inescapable circumstances is explained through the philosophical concept of Juxtaposition in 'Amours de Voyage'. The images of travel and marriage procession suggesting a temporary phase underline the same paradox. The tension is summed up in Claude's ambivalent and paradoxical statement in 'Amours de Voyage' :

I am in love, you declare.

I think not so.

This is, again, most obvious in the argumentation in Claude's letter in Canto III of the same poem :

But for the funeral train which

the bridegroom sees in the distance,

Would he so joyfully, think you,

fall in with the marriage procession ?

But for that final discharge,

would he dare to enlist in that service ? (*Poems*, 203)

Unfortunately, this ambivalent mood and argumentative tone have forced upon Clough an expansiveness which leaves nothing for the reader to imagine as in the following :

But love, the large repose

Restorative, not to mere outside needs

Skin-deep, but thoroughly to the total man,

Exists, so exceptional, hard to guess ;

When guessed, so often counterfeit ; in brief,

A thing not possibly to be conceived

An item in the reckonings of the wise. (*Poems*, 270)

There is a tendency towards this elaborateness in Clough's descriptions such as the following which otherwise expresses astonishing depth of woman's feeling of love through the symbols of ocean and stream :

But a revulsion wrought in the brain  
     and bosom of Elspie ;  
 And the passion she just had compared  
     to the vehement ocean,  
 Urging in high spring-tide its masterful way  
     through the mountains,  
 Forcing and flooding the silvery stream,  
     as it runs from the inland ;  
 That great power withdrawn,  
     receding here and passive,  
 Felt she in myriad springs, her sources,  
     far in the mountains,  
 Stirring, collecting, rising,  
     upheaving, forth-out flowing,  
 Taking and joining, right welcome,  
     that delicate rill in the valley,  
 Filling it, making it strong,  
     and still descending, seeking,  
 With a blind forefeeling descending  
     even, and seeking,  
 With a delicious forefeeling,  
     the great still sea before it ;  
 There deep into it, far, to carry,  
     and lose in its bosom,  
 Waters that still from their sources  
     exhaustless are fain to be added. (*Poems*, p.162)

It is clear, then, that Clough's imagery covers a wide range. It is drawn from Nature, universe, science, engineering and everyday life. They appeal to all our senses, most prominent of them being the auditory and the visual ones.

Clough's apparently final position which regard to love as companionship is suggested by his allusions to classics. Shakespeare's Miranda lending her hands to relieve Ferdinand of his burden and Adam and Eve working and helping one another in the garden of Eden are examples to the point.

The image of the lovers' ride in Browning's 'The Last Ride

Together' is connected with that of travel in Clough's 'Amours de Voyage', but is used for an entirely different purpose. It shows the lovers' absorption in love, the excitement and thrill of enjoyment—the dynamics of love defying time and space. In fact, the whole universe is condensed to make room for the lovers and to provide them with the feeling of nearness. The picture is predominantly visual, auditory and tactile. In this poem and 'Cristina' the sublimation is further suggested by the time motif, the moment overlapping into eternity and by the philosophical concept of the relation between flesh and soul, one leading to another. To justify his point, Browning's lover also argues, but unlike Clough's he draws a satisfactory conclusion. Browning introduces symbols of almost static and transitory achievement in a soldier, statesman, poet, musician and sculptor. In 'Love among the Ruins' he favourably compares love with vast empires and contracts the present with the past. Browning also makes use of irony and paradox to point out the gap between hopes cherished and unrealized due to limitations of flesh. It is not very difficult to see that all the elements of Browning's treatment point towards realization of the moment. He is much more dramatic than Clough and even a vivid but condensed natural description like the following extract from 'Meeting at Night', shows the difference between the two poets :

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;  
Three fields to cross till a farm appears :  
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,  
Than the two hearts beating each to each.

Like Clough, Tennyson looks upon lovers as helpmates and alludes to mythological Lethe and the biblical origin of creation, of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, to suggest mutual help and growth from time immemorial. The identity of their causes and the necessity for interdependence and mutual benefit are implied by the simile of the rise and fall of gods and dwarfs. Tennyson makes use of a paradox to explain the relative importance of woman to man and emphasize woman's individuality in their growth.

For woman is not undeveloped man,  
But diverse : could we  
    make her as the man,



Sweet Love were slain :  
 his dearest bond is this,  
 Not like to like, but like  
 in difference. ('The Princess' Canto VII)

This organic and balanced growth of man and woman and its future effect have been conveyed through the images of the growth of a tree rid of parasites and harvest which again forms the basis of sowing in future. But the most powerful image to take up the vital relation is the one of a single perfect animal with a two-celled heart. It implies the essential unity without which either of the two is incomplete, inefficient and dead. The healthy growth of the body results in mental and intellectual development and betterment of humanity. The nature of harmony to be achieved is suggested by the simile of matching of words to music. All this will usher in, as Tennyson visualises, "the statelier Eden", the reign of "the world's great bridals, chaste and calm" to remind the lovers of their moral responsibility towards the birth of a superior and more prosperous kind of human race. Tennyson's images, then, are mainly visual, auditory and tactile and drawn from Nature, science and music. Tennyson, like Clough, alludes to mythology and classics and makes use of paradox; but his lovers, unlike those of Clough, do not argue and vacillate. They do not belong to a world they dislike. Tennyson also differs from Clough in pictorial description, in being more attentive to aspects of colour, brightness and temperature of the object described, as in the following ;

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white ;  
 Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk ;  
 Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font ;  
 The fire-fly wakens : waken thou with me.

('The Princess').

Arnold emphasizes isolation in love in 'Switzerland' group of poems through the image of islands dotted all over the sea. The sea stands for mystery, vastness and mercilessness of other. Yet the soft moonlight, refreshing breeze of spring and the sweet song of nightingales sweep the islands and create an atmosphere of longing to be near each other. The irony serves to enhance the tone of despair. The loneliness is further suggested by the "sphered course" of heavenly bodies in the universe. This painful separation is due to the wishes of God who symbolizes

dictatorial power Arnold's preference for audio-visual image is clearly seen in these poems and "Human Life". He also alludes to the mythological story of Endymion to imply the impossibility of ideal love on earth, which suggests just the opposite in Clough. Clough draws upon a wider range of experiences and treatment, but Arnold is more suggestive in the use of imagery, more vivid, more restrained and simpler in manner as in the following extract from 'The Forsaken Merman' :

Come, dear children, let us away ;  
Down and away below I  
Now my brothers call from the bay,  
Now the great winds shoreward blow,  
Now the salt tides seaward flow ;  
Now the wild white horses play.  
Champ and chafe and and toys in the spray.  
Children dear, let us away !  
This way, this way I

### III

Clough maintains variety in the choice of poetic forms also. 'The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich' which deals primarily with adventures of some Oxford undergraduates in Scottish highlands and secondarily with the love affairs between Philip and Elspie is a narrative poem. 'Amours de Voyage', an epistolary verse novel, aims at presenting a complex intellectual, Claude, who has gone to Rome to study specimens of art, falls in love but fails to respond to it due to an innate ambivalence in his nature. 'Dipsychus' which examines love among other things to be an inadequate solution to innumerable problems of life is a poetic drama. 'Mari Magno' consists of a series of tales based on love and travel. Besides these, Clough has also treated love in many of his lyrical poems.

His simple love-lyrics in the groups called 'Ambarvalia' and 'Shorter Poems' range from regular iambic tetrameter quatrains rhyming in couplets as in

Were you with me, or I with you,  
There's nought, methinks, I might not do ;  
Could venture here, and venture there,  
And never fear, nor ever care. (*Poems* p.100)

or iambic tetrameter alternating with iambic trimeter rhyming

a b a b as in

Ah, what is love, our love, she said,  
 Ah, what is human love ?  
 A fire, of earthly fuel fed,  
 Full fain to soar above. (*Poems* p.2)

to iambic tetrameter, 8- line stanza, rhyming a b c b d e f e with variations where the person is grappling with a puzzling experience as in

Beside me—in the car,—she sat,  
 She spoke not, no, nor looked to me :  
 From her to me, from me to her,  
 What passed so subtly stealthily ?  
 As rose to rose that by it blows  
 Its interchanged aroma flings ;  
 Or wake to sound of one sweet note  
 The virtues of departed strings. (*Poems*, p.36)

Or iambic trimeter with a lot of variations with no rhyme and stanza pattern to suggest that the lover is too deeply in love and proud of it to control his expression as in

When the dews are earliest falling,  
 When the evening glen is grey,  
 Ere thou lookest, ere thou speakest,  
 My beloved  
 I depart, and I return to thee,—  
 Return, return, return. (*Poems*, p 47)

The 'Anglo-savage hexameters' in 'The Bothie' and 'Amours de Voyage', although experimental and irregular, have been handled with ease and flexibility. The dignified movement of blank verse suits the deepest conflict of mind arising from the most serious considerations of various problems including love in 'Dipsychus'. Iambic pentameter with rhyming couplets has been used as the basic metrical pattern for the pleasant tales of love in 'Mari Magno'.

Sometimes, as in 'Natura Naturans', Clough has made use of alliteration, cluster of consonants, assonance and rhyme which work together with the rich imagery and association to communicate excitement, thrill and the deepest enjoyment of love.

Flashed flickering forth fantastic flies,  
 Big bees their burly bodies swung,  
 Rooks roused with civic din the elms

And lark its wild reveillez rung ;  
In Libyan dell the light gazelle,  
The leopard lithe in Indian glade,  
And dolphin, brightening tropic seas,  
In us were living, leapt and played : (*Poems*, p.37)

Moreover, run-on lines in Clough's love poems, variation of pauses and line length, repetition of phrases and sentence structure, dependent clauses, conditionals such as 'yet' 'but' and 'if' questions and exclamations—all fit in with the movement of complex thoughts as in the following :

Juxtaposition is great—but, my friend,  
I fear me, the maiden  
Hardly would thank or acknowledge  
the lover that sought to obtain her,  
Not as the thing he would wish,  
but the thing he must even put up with,—  
Hardly would tender her hand  
to the wooer that candidly told her  
That she is but for a space, an ad-interim  
solace and pleasure,—  
That in the end she shall yield  
to a perfect and absolute something,  
Which I then for myself shall behold,  
and not another,—  
Which, amid fondest endearments, meantime  
I forget not, forsake not.  
Ah, ye feminine souls, so loving  
and so exacting,  
Since we cannot escape, must we  
even submit to deceive you ?  
Since so cruel is truth, sincerity  
shocks and revolts you  
Will you have us your slaves to lie  
to you, flatter and——leave you ?

(*Poems*, p. 203—4)

Above all, as the illustration has made out clearly, Clough has used colloquial language throughout. This informal language of an analytic or an intellectual has added a touch of reality to the discussion of an everyday affair like love and has lifted it out of the Victorian atmosphere.

Browning deals with love in dramatic lyrics like 'Cristina' and 'Love among the Ruins', dramatic romances like 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'The Last Ride Together' and dramatic monologues like 'Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli'. He displays much more variety of metrical and rhyme patterns in his love poems than one finds in Clough. 'A Woman's Last Word', to name only a few, is written in trochaic trimeter alternating with a cretic and rhyming a b a b, 'Parting at Morning' in iambic tetrameter with variations rhyming a b b a, 'Any wife to any Husband' in iambic pentameter rhyming aa b cc b. The long iambic pentameter lines with variations alternating with short single cretic in 'Love Among the Ruins' produce an entirely different kind of rhythm. Browning seems more interested in rhythm than in rhyme in 'The Last Ride Together', where he achieves the rhythmic movement of the ride by mixing iambic tetrameter with anapaest, by having end-stopped and run-on lines and variation of pauses. In addition to this, the poem, as the first stanza below shows has the repetition of similar sentence patterns and words like 'since' and 'if' indicating the argumentative tone.

I said—Then. dearest, since 'tis so,  
 Since now at length my fate I know,  
 Since nothing all my love avails,  
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,  
 Since this was written and needs must be —  
 My whole heart rises up to bless  
 Your name in pride and thankfulness I  
 Take back the hope you gave, —I claim  
 Only memory of the same,  
 — And this beside, if you will not blame,  
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

Tennyson has treated the theme of love, loss and renunciation both in 'Maud' which consists of a series of lyrics and in 'Enoch Arden', a narrative poem. He has dealt with woman's education and her position in society in 'The Princess', a dramatic poem with lovely lyrical interludes. 'The Idylls of the King' is essentially a series of episodes about exploits, love and marriage of the king and his knights. As for the style, blank verse is used with skill and freedom in both 'The Princess' and 'The Idylls'. But Tennyson soars high above Clough as an artist. Indeed the former has far

excelled the latter in the extraordinary variety of his lyrics, in the manipulation of vowel and consonant sounds, in the choice of words and diverse-metrical patterns illustrated in such passages as the following beginning with

I have led her home, my love, my only friend.

(‘Maud’)

Come into the garden, Maud

(‘Maud’)

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean I

(‘The Princess’)

The splendour falls on castle walls.

(‘The Princess’)

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white.

(‘The Princess’)

Arnold has expressed his attitude towards love in ‘The Forsaken Merman’, a narrative poem, and lyrics like ‘Switzerland’. Although his range is narrow, he is more successful than Clough in his poems, and his success is due to a rigorous discipline to which he has subjected his passion. In fact, Arnold’s poems are purer, clearer, more lucid, shorn of all excesses and adornment. The first stanza of the lyric ‘To Marguerite’, quoted earlier, and the following extract from ‘The Forsaken Merman’ showing economy of word, refrain, rhyme, variation of line length and metrical skill bear out the point :

Come, dear children, come away down ;

Call no more !

One last look at the white-wall’d town,

And the little grey church on the windy shore,

Then come down :

She will not come though you call all day ;

Come away, come away !

#### IV

Clough’s creed of love as companionship should be understood as a purely temporary arrangement in the absence of any fixed belief. Like his characters, Claude and Dipsychus, he makes an intellectual analysis of love, vacillates and leaves the whole issue inconclusive. There are so many buts and ifs in his arguments, so much of questioning, that Clough’s characters resemble Eliot’s Prufrock in their basic quality of ambivalence, an inability to respond

to love and life in general. It is here that Clough is of and beyond his age at the same time. He may not be as firm in his belief, as effective in his treatment or as perfect in his style as Tennyson, Browning and Arnold. He may be a minor poet compared to them, but a minor poet with an original mind.

### Reference :

*Poems* refer to *The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*. ed. A. L. P. Norrington ( O.U.P. 1968 ); *Poems, 1895 to Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough* ( Macmillan, 1895 ) ; *Poems, 1951 to The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*. ed. Lowry, Norrington and Mulhauser (Clarendon Press, 1951) ; *The Correspondence to The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough*. ed , F. L. Mulhauser ( Clarendon Press, 1957 ), *Arnold's Poems to The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* ed. Tinker and Lowry ( O.U.P. 1936 ).

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## CALIBAN IN SHAKESPEARE AND BROWNING : A STUDY IN CONTRAST

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NANDINI SEN

WHEN Browning's Caliban in *Caliban upon Setebos* is placed side by side with Shakespeare's Caliban, one is immediately struck by the essential difference that exists along with their similarities : Caliban in Browning is cruel, wanton and naive without being evil which Shakespeare's Caliban is.

*The Tempest* is concerned with the opposition of Nature and Art—between the worlds of Prospero's Art and Caliban's Nature as Frank Kermode has said.<sup>1</sup> Caliban like the Shepherd in the pastoral is the natural man against whom the cultivated man is measured. He is a "salvage and deformed slave" incapable of gentleness and humanity. Like the vegetative aspect of man's soul, Caliban is the "house keeper" of the island, providing nourishment for Prospero and Miranda when they arrive in the island and is later commanded to "fetch us in fuel". Even when he would change masters, Caliban speaks of the services he would render :

"I'll show thee the best springs ; I'll pluck thee berries ; I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough." There is no such "theology" behind Browning's Caliban. The poem begins with a description of Caliban and the details are all physical. ("Sprawl", "belly", "elbows", "fists"). All the analogies used by Caliban himself are drawn from the animal world to which he belongs and his vocabulary is also limited to this world : "snaky sea", "lithe as a leech", "many-handed as a cuttle-fish". He is incapable of making value-judgements and the physical and the spiritual are not distinguished in his mind. He is literally and metaphorically embedded in the "mire" of animality ; there is hardly any difference between Caliban and the "small eft-things" that crawl along his spine. He even describes the sea as being "lazy" for like an animal he does not understand the concept of "calmness", he can only think in terms of "work" and "absence of work". Sense-experiences, too, are not easily distinguished in his primitive mind. As a result he uses such compound epithets which produce

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1. Introduction to *The Tempest* ; Arden Edition.



a striking mixture of two sense-impressions as "dim-delicious" and "green-dense". When Caliban hopes fervently that Setebos will be destroyed someday, his comparisons are once again gross :

Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,  
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime . . .

Caliban's metaphor is sometimes derived from the world of primitive survival, of decaying corpses and life springing from them :  
"Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain . . .".

The inherent evil in Shakespeare's Caliban is stressed from the beginning in the account of Caliban's origin. Caliban's birth, as Prospero tells us, was inhuman :

"Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself/Upon the wicked dam . . .".

He belongs to the lowest level of sensual pain and pleasure ; he is incapable of love and is fit only for lust :

. . . . . thou didst seek to violate  
The honour of my child.

Caliban is, indeed, an "Abhorred slave,  
Which any print of goodness wilt not take  
Being capable of all ill.

His evil thoughts about Miranda—"she will become thy bed"—as he is discussing the conspiracy with Stephano and Trinculo suggest a perverse nature that is nowhere to be found in Browning's Caliban.

Shakespeare's Caliban rebels against Prospero from the beginning when he enters the stage cursing him. Caliban protests that he should have his freedom which is his birthright :

This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak'st from me.

He speaks of how Prospero had deceived him by sweet words and "water with berries in't" only to learn from him "all the qualities o'th' isle". But Caliban is a cunning monster and the moment Prospero threatens him ("I'll rack thee with old cramps, / Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar, / That beasts shall tremble at thy din"), he becomes subdued as he realizes that he must obey Prospero whose Art is of such power that it can even control Setebos and make a vassal of him. Caliban frightened by the threat shows himself to be cunning and wicked, Browning's Caliban is naive and childlike in his fear of Setebos as he makes a pathetic attempt to appease the anger

of Setebos by his childish vows of penance :

Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month  
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape'.

In Browning's poem Caliban's love of concrete details is astonishing. He tries to impart concreteness even to sunbeams which "cross / And recross till they weave a spider-web"; the apples too are described as "tooth-some apples". Apart from this concreteness, Caliban's world is full of colours : "green dense", the black otter, "a certain badger brown . . . . with that slant white-wedge eye", the purple spots of the crabs, "whose nippers end in red", the blue feathers of the jay. Caliban in *The Tempest* does not make use of such specific descriptions of colour. His picture of the island abounds in sense-experiences with a predominance of auditory effects that reveal the animality of the speaker :

. . . . . the isle is full of noises ;  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments .  
Will hum about mine ears ; and sometime voices,  
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again . . . .

The God of Browning's Caliban is anthropomorphic and he attributes to Setebos all the failings of his own character. The speculations about Setebos may, be said to be the speculations on Caliban's nature as well. Like Caliban, Setebos is portrayed as wanton, capricious and malicious "making and marring clay at will". He is full of envy for His own creations who are happier than Him, just as the crickets who sing all day are merrier than Caliban. Such is the maliciousness of Setebos that even the basis of all His creations is spite, restlessness and jealousy. It is fear which dominates Caliban's responses to Setebos and leads him to exaggerate the monstrosity of Setebos. This same cruelty and capriciousness is to be seen in Caliban's behaviour to the crabs. As he watches the crabs pass one after another, he stones the twenty-first, "loving not, hating not, just choosing so". This is brought out also in his account of how the jay is tortured "when from her wings you twitch the feathers blue" or in "... a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared, blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame".

Like his Setebos, Caliban thinks that he has the power to

create : "I yet could make a live bird out of clay".

Shakespeare's Caliban also reveals his cruelty and perverseness through his language. When he conspires with Stephano and Trinculo, he instructs them on the tortures they should inflict on Prospero in a detailed and gruesome way :

... thou mayst brain him,

Having first seiz'd his books ; or with a log / Batter his skull.  
or paunch him with a stake,

Or cut his wezand with thy knife

The brutality of Caliban is brought out very clearly in these words

Caliban is essentially servile and he desires to become a servant of Trinculo and Stephano :

A plague upon the tyrant that I served !

I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee

Thou wondrous man.

He does not want freedom but bondage, he only prefers to make a change of master. Browning's Caliban is, in this respect, more human for he whole heartedly wishes for the destruction of Setebos which will lead to his own emancipation. Caliban in *The Tempest* is not aware of these implications as he rejoices that he has a new master :

"Freedom, high-day ! high-day, freedom ! freedom, high-day, freedom !" His base obsequiousness is further emphasized in "Let me lick thy shoe" and

... I, thy Caliban,

For aye thy foot-licker.

Shakespeare's Caliban is free from the enigma that one sees in Browning's Caliban. Caliban's enigma is like that of the paradox of the crystal pike "twixt two warm walls of wave", "hating and loving warmth alike". Caliban hates Setebos so much that he wishes :

That some strange day, will either the Quilet catch

And conquer Setebos, or likelier He

Decrept may doze, doze, as good as die.

Yet he cannot obliterate Setebos from his thoughts and Caliban's reiteration of the name—"Setebos, Setebos and Setebos ! —implies that Setebos is both an obsession and a torment ; for Caliban there is something irresistible about these speculations.

Caliban, amidst all his naivete and animality, is capable of

showing a perceptive mind when he seems to point out the very essence of human existence :

Idly I He doth the worst in this our life,  
Giving just respite lest we die through pain. . . .

He shows the same perception as the philosophers and playwrights—life is in essence tragic but there are some moments of joy and these brief interludes help to sustain life. There is, however, a difference between this and Caliban's philosophy, for Caliban thinks that the moments of happiness only make a man suffer longer and the severest suffering is reserved for the last days ("saving last pain for worst"). It is better not to express one's happiness which only makes Setebos inflict more pain on His creatures :

Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire  
Is, not to seem too happy . . .

Caliban expands his hierarchy to include Quiet, the Supreme Being who created Setebos. Caliban's mind is in a perpetual state of spiritual darkness and he can only think of Quiet as an automation, an unfeeling and indifferent power "that feels nor joy nor grief". Caliban is incapable of understanding the concept of a benevolent God who loves His creatures. To him God is like Setebos, a cruel tyrant, completely callous about the sufferings of His creations.

It is interesting to note that when the poem begins Caliban uses the third person. But as the poem progresses, he becomes increasingly involved and his change over to the first person shows his total involvement in the action :

"Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash". His egocentricity now asserts itself more strongly as the impersonal "he" is replaced by "I". Caliban seems to assume the powers of Setebos and the use of the first person implies a deific amplification of his sub-human self. No such change is shown by Shakespeare's Caliban who, from the first, keeps on using the first person.

We have seen that Browning uses certain linguistic devices to show that his Caliban belongs to the world of animals. The language of Shakespeare's Caliban is different from the language of the other characters in *The Tempest*—a language that is in keeping with Caliban's character. Caliban uses simple statements to express his thoughts, and all depends not on the imagination but on sensory impressions as his description of the island in III. 2 reveals. In studied contrast we have Prospero's complex and condensed language when, in a single sentence, he discloses the

whole plot of his brother and the king of Naples. (I. 2.11., 121-132). The comparisons and imagery that Caliban uses are restrained—always within the range of experience possible for him. In Act II Sc.2, Caliban enters with a burden of wood cursing Prospero. He begins with :

All the infections that sun sucks up  
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him  
By inch-meal a disease !

This and what follows, all place Caliban in the world of animals and the primitive man, and his comparisons emphasize this : "like a firebrand", "pitch me i 'th' mire," "like hedgehogs" The appropriateness of Caliban's language becomes more clear when we compare his speech (II.2) with that of Ferdinand in the following Act. We realize at once that there has been a complete change of tone and Ferdinand's language has become poetic as he patiently suffers "this wooden slavery."

The storm comes to Browning's Caliban as something like the Apocalypse. He had been dreaming of the complete destruction of Setebos' power and the repetition of the word "doze" in ... He/Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die — creates the image of Setebos lying on his deathbed, for the death of Setebos will bring freedom for Caliban. At this point, when Caliban is wrapped in pleasant dreams of wishful thinking, the storm shatters his dreams with an unexpected suddenness and he gets a revelation of Setebos' power. He trembles in terror lest he is punished by Setebos for cursing Him. He is now eager to please his God and willing to accept any penance for his foolish "prattling" ;

Fool to gibe at Him !  
Lo ! 'Lieth flat and loved Setebos !

This moment of climax, shows Caliban's renunciation of speech and as he lies on the ground craving Setebos' pardon, he reminds one of a terror-stricken animal crouching in front of its master.

The storm has such an impact on Caliban that the very words he uses are an enactment of it.

What, what ? A curtain o'ver the world at once !  
—thus begins the description and the stress on the first two words betrays Caliban's amazement and apprehension and the stress on the first three words in the next line ("Crickets

stop hissing) along with the sibilants lend emphasis to the approaching storm. Caliban's once colourful world is now full of fire and thunder threatening to destroy him for his folly and disobedience. The images of thunder and fire are in themselves emblematic because of the obvious scriptural associations.

Shakespeare's Caliban possesses an evil trait which gives us a feeling of repulsion; this evil trait is absent in Browning's Caliban. He is more likeable and gets our sympathy for his helplessness.

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## LOSS AND RECOMPENSE : TINTERN ABBEY AND THE 'IMMORTAL ODE'\*

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S. B. MUKHERJI

"Tintern Abbey"—the crowning dome to the edifice that is *The Lyrical Ballads*—is in a sense, the dome of Wordsworth's entire poetry. It is impossible to overemphasize the momentous significance of this poem. It stands, with the "Immortality Ode," as the greatest landmark in Wordsworth's poetry. These poems consecrate the plentitude of the tide, the power of the ebb. Not merely the essential Wordsworth, the entire spiritual history of that essential Wordsworth is, in a way, caught in the poems.

The poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* other than "Tintern Abbey" were mainly an exploration of the outer world characterized by objectivity and imaginative realism. "Tintern Abbey" abandons all theories of diction, language and subject set forth in the ambitious *Preface* and goes back to the lofty tone and style of verse already launched in the fragment of *The Prelude* and *The Recluse*—essentially subjective, introspective, evocative of memories of old in the bosom of nature, and "highly original and daring" in the attempt to capture inner mental and spiritual experiences.

Alike in spirit, form and theme, the poem breathes the sombre stateliness of an Ode. Yet, as Darbishire points out, "the blank-verse, low-toned and familiar, yet impassioned, moves with a sureness and inevitable ease."<sup>1</sup>

The poem opens with a vivid, evocative description of the "beauteous forms" once again beheld on the banks of the river Wye. If it owes, as Moorman says, "a distinct, though unobtrusive debt to Gilpin's *Tour of the Wye*," that debt is amply repaid by the freshness and tranquil beauty of the description. But I cannot agree with Moorman when she writes :

for all "the impassioned music of the versification," . . .  
'Tintern Abbey' is, at least in its beginning, a "landscape-poem" in the eighteenth century tradition.

I am not aware of any poet of that tradition who could command such mellifluous blank-verse steeped in feeling, breathing

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\* Adapted from the author's forthcoming book. *The Poetry of Wordsworth* being published by Vikas.

tranquil peace, evoking a landscape so vivid yet so subtly interfused with a mood that pulsates with the intensity of a vision that sees into the heart of Nature. Nor do I know of any poet of that tradition who could write those magical lines which, like the lines in "There was a Boy," would have set Coleridge screaming in the desert, "Wordsworth !"

These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild.

But let us plunge into the heart of the poem. "These beautiful forms" recollected "mid the din of towns and cities . . . In hours of weariness," had brought on "sensations sweet felt in the blood, and felt along the heart." Wordsworth clearly recognizes the dominant philosophy of the day—sensationalism and associationism—in these and following lines. The senses absorb sensations which are transformed into feelings, which in turn leave the impress on the mind, purify it, elevate it. But we recognize Wordsworth and none other in the immortal lines that follow. The physical and the moral were the realms that Wordsworth shared with Locke and Hartley. The blessed *spiritual* was a realm of which Wordsworth alone was the sole monarch. That "realm of aspect more sublime" opens up in the passage that follows :

Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime : that blessed mood,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened : that serene and blessed mood  
In which the affections gently lead us on,  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul :  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

We are apt to forget that the pronoun "them" (second line) goes for its antecedent as far back as fourteen lines : "These beautiful forms. (The pronoun "them" is used for the first time in the line : "I have owed to them, in hours of weariness . . . .") These same "beautiful forms" bring "another gift of aspect more sublime" : a



"blessed mood" which is nothing less than a spiritual Vision—a vision which pierces the otherwise impenetrable mysteries of "all this unintelligible world," mysteries that had oppressed him in France and after. Wordsworth says in effect almost exactly the same in regard to the famous (or is it notorious?) vernal wood "impulse" in "The Tables Turned." There the "gift" of Nature was a vision into moral evil and good; here comes from "beauteous forms" a sublimer gift of a vision into the heart of the mystery of life. Both the gifts are of the same kind: they are *spiritual* in essence. Yet, curiously enough, the Morleys have never raised their skeptical brows over these lines. (One wonders whether it is the inconspicuous pronoun that saves Wordsworth!) Any way, the reiteration goes to prove that in both the poems the poet affirms what he not merely believed but experienced.

In the lines that follow, "the blessed mood" comes back with an added epithet, "serene." And Wordsworth as serenely crosses over into what has to be recognized as a supremely mystical, trancelike state of saints in profound meditation—a total *oblivion of the physical* and attainment of the transcendental, of the luminous, "living soul." That attainment, as great saints of all ages have borne out, is followed by intense spiritual visions. Serenely, yet with amazing intrepidity, Wordsworth affirms that "those beauteous forms" even when only recollected, have slowly led him, step after step, into that ineffable state; awakened the spiritual eye that discovers in the heart of the universe joy infinite and harmony profound. That joy and that harmony are *Powers* in the Wordsworthian sense. They lead him into the heart of mysteries. They make him see "into the life of things."

The reminiscent memories widen in the second section of the poem. "The picture of the mind revives"—the poet goes back to the boyhood and adolescent memories of his nature-love. He presents three stages of it: 1) the boyhood *stage of pure physical sensation*—"the coarser pleasures of my boyish days, and their glad animal movements;" 2) the adolescent and early-youth *stage of pure feeling* when Nature was "all in all," its colours, forms and phenomena "a passion," "an appetite;" "its aching joys and dizzy raptures" grounded on the senses, with "no need of a remoter charm by thought supplied." It was a feverish, unreflecting, sensuous absorption into Nature; 3) the third and last stage—the *present stage of maturity*—is a *stage of thought, of mystic realization* based on medi-

tation, on a mystical perception of the true character of the universe after listening to "the still, sad music of humanity." That mystic realization is "a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused"—a Vision into the all-pervading spirit of Nature, a vision of a grand unity and harmony :

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."

The coarser pleasures of boyhood, the passion and appetite of "thoughtless youth," have all vanished. But the poet has no regrets, for other gifts of abundant recompense have followed : a new spiritual vision of nature in which "the still, sad music of humanity" has played a vital role.

Let us now attempt to look more closely. Four points arrest our attention as we do so. Firstly, one of the profoundly mystical apprehensions in Wordsworth's poetry is traced back, almost directly, to the "still, sad music of humanity." In meditative calm the poet has learnt to correlate that sad music to his Vision of Nature. They melt and flow and blend into supreme harmony. Thanks to this synthesis and harmony, he has come to feel "a presence that disturbs" him "with the joy of elevated thoughts"; "a presence" that encompasses both the outer and the inner worlds : "the round ocean," "the living air," "the blue sky" and "the mind of man".

Secondly, human sorrow and suffering lose their sharp edges and become a *music*—where harmony is of the essence—because of this sense of harmony. A harmony between life and its realities on the one hand and the vast presence of nature on the other, has fashioned this *music* in his mind—"still" and "sad," yet "nor harsh nor grating"

Thirdly, one marks the distinction Wordsworth makes between "feeling" and "thought." In "thoughtless youth," when Nature was all in all, feeling and passion dominated. In maturer life the

"dizzy reaptures" faded; experience widened. "The hour of Man" had come, and with it, intimate knowledge of human evil and suffering—abroad in France, at home in Dorsetshire. Chastened and subdued, he has learnt to look on Nature more thoughtfully. The new experience had to be integrated with his old love of Nature. A vaster harmony involving the synthesis of discordant elements was called for. This was achieved when he discovered a new Vision of Nature which took in "the still, sad music of humanity," a vision in which Nature's presence and human misery were brought to a concord. That is why the poet could call it *music*.

Fourthly, read in the context of the three preceding thoughts, one of the most baffling lines in Wordsworth's poetry yields up its mystery: "a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused".<sup>3</sup> "More," the word of comparison, refers to the present experience in contrast to the "thoughtless youth" when the deeper Vision was lacking: when Nature's presence was not yet deeply interfused with "the still, sad music." What "disturbs" the poet with joy now is the "elevated thought" that Nature is revealed now as it was never before, as a Spirit, a "presence," that takes in both the worlds, the outer and the inner, the natural and the human. And this deeper interfusion has brought to him a sense of all-pervading harmony which he attempts to convey through the word *music*. In a memorable passage in *The Prelude* Wordsworth dwells on the power of this musical harmony and its mysterious workings. He relates the growth of the "immortal spirit" to this "harmony in music":

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society. (ll., 340 seq.)

"Tintern Abbey" has borne testimony to a musical harmony uniting the disparate mainly in the *world outside*. *The Prelude* passage, composed about a year later,<sup>4</sup> speaks again of the "inscrutable workmanship" of that *musical harmony* "that reconciles discordant elements" in the *world within*.

I have analyzed so far four major thoughts in the poem. I venture to come now to my central thesis. Firstly, this *integral vision*, where discordant elements blend into a musical harmony, is the bedrock of Wordsworth's poetical faith—the Wordsworth of the great decade. On this *vision throve* his creative power; on

it was reared his cheerful faith that "There is a blessing in the air"; that love is "a universal birth. From heart to heart . . . stealing"; that there is a "blessed power that rolls about, below, above " And through it, presently, he would recognize "A grandeur in the beatings of the heart."

Secondly, in childhood and "thoughtless youth," when human misery did not yet intrude on his vision, nor "the discordant elements," it was a *kindred yet different sense* of cosmic harmony and his own rapturous unison with it that was the fountain-head of Wordsworth's *visionary power*, the heart of his imaginative life. This was the *prime fount*—the source of all those moments of mystical experience when "the light of sense goes out, but with a flash that has revealed the invisible world." It was this Vision born of a mystical sense of unison and harmony which brought him to the threshold and enabled him to take off, to put it in Darbishire's words, "from the world of sense into the world of spirit."

Thirdly, from this *primal fount* and the *visionary power* that attended it was derived "*the celestial light*" that gleamed upon him in childhood; that brought "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" in adolescence, the loss of which he neither "mourns nor murmurs" in "Tintern Abbey." In the "Immortality Ode," when "The glory and the freshness of a dream" would be irrevocably lost, it was the loss of this *visionary power* that he would lament.

Lastly, this earlier *visionary power* must be carefully distinguished from the later *integral vision*. In the first two books of *The Prelude* the former was "the fountain-light," the very life-breath of Wordsworth's imaginative life since early boyhood, a life embalmed in immortal poetry. The latter was the well-head of his *creative life*, of his poetry during the great decade. The *visionary power*, and the entranced imaginative life it evoked, was the *base on which was built*, through which developed, the later *integral vision* and the poetry of the Wordsworth we care for. The one grew into the other, and the transforming power was a spiritual experience: "Hearing often times the still, sad music of humanity." This *integral vision*, with the *visionary power* as the base, finds immortal expression, in the "blessed mood" passage of "Tintern Abbey," which we have already discussed. Here is the quintessence of Wordsworth's romantic Vision, the life-breath of his poetry.

On March 27, 1802, "at breakfast Wordsworth wrote part of an 'Ode'," records Dorothy. Wordsworth composed the first two

stanzas ending with the dismal confession :

But yet I know, where'er I go

That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

Nature to him is still "beautiful and fair;" yet something vital has been lost : "the fountain-light" of his imaginative life since childhood. Four years earlier, in "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth had spoken of a "loss," but in a very different way, with no regrets :

Not for this

Faint I nor mourn nor murmur ; other gifts

Have followed ; for such loss, I would believe

Abundant recompense.

We are already familiar with the "recompense" and its "abundance."

A vital question arrests our attention here : where lies the difference, if any, between the two "losses"—the one brushed aside in "Tintern Abbey" and the other deeply deplored in "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." I am not aware of a fully satisfying answer to this fundamental question by any critic. Indeed, it is surprising a host of critics, including Garrod, do not touch upon the question at all.

Professor Bowra takes up the issue but casually in his admirable essay on the "Ode" in *The Romantic Imagination*. He writes :

When Wordsworth began to compose the "Ode" the main problem with which it deals was *not an entirely new* discovery. For sometime he had been conscious of the waning of his youthful vision . . . . "Tintern Abbey" anticipates the "Ode" in distinguishing between two periods in Wordsworth's life. In his youth he thrived on a *visionary power* which worked through nature ; later he found a living presence which inspired him with devotion and was the "soul of his moral being" . . . Wordsworth *seems*, after a period of years, to have *reverted to what he had known for some time* and to have found a new challenge to it. (Italics mine)

Two questions, momentous in significance, face us. First, is the loss ignored in "Tintern Abbey" the "waning of his youthful vision, of his *visionary power*, as Professor Bowra makes it out to be ? To pose the question differently : are the two "losses" in the two poems the same, or virtually the same, as Bowra seems to think ? He does not, to my mind, face the issue squarely, but evaded it with a negative phrase, "not entirely new," and a doubtful

verb, "seems". It is not at all clear what he implies by "not an entirely new discovery" and "seems . . . to have reverted to what he had known for sometime . . ." The unmistakable implication however, as I understand, is that Wordsworth, when he composed "Tintern Abbey" had lost his visionary power, and the loss was *virtually the same* as that deplored in the "Ode"—for he reverts "to what he had known for sometime." I do not agree here with Bowra, for reasons mentioned below. Our second question follows from the first—if the losses are the same, then why "nor mourn nor murmur" in "Tintern Abbey"? And contrarily, why such grave concern in the "Ode"?

Before I attempt to answer the questions raised, let me place the two relevant passages from the two poems. The *Tintern poem* states :

For nature then . . .  
To me was all in all. I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite ; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.—The time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures.

The "Ode" opens with the sad confession :

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream  
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—  
Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

Let us concentrate on the phrases that relate to the "loss" in the Tintern poem : "Haunted me like a passion"; "An appetite ; a feeling and a love"; "aching joys," "dizzy raptures." Those in the "Ode" are : "Apparelled in celestial light"; "The glory and the

freshness of a dream"; "the visionary gleam" (Stanza IV). Is there no difference in the spirit, character and content of the phrases in the two poems? I believe *there is*. Traits of vigorous adolescence—intense absorption, frenzy of passion, ecstatic rapture—they are no more. Such is the character of the "loss" in the first poem. The "loss" in the "Ode" is more elusive, intangible, profound—the dream-like *visionary power* of boyhood referred to earlier. The "losses", to my mind, belong to two different worlds: of feeling and sensibility in the former; of the spirit, of the Imagination in the latter. The *visionary power* of childhood has undergone a *change* in adolescence—a change in its mode of expression, manifestation. But it remains the *primal fountain* of Wordsworth's Imaginative life and of his love of nature. It remains the "master-light" of all his days, the "fountain-light" of all his seeing.

"Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first I came among these hills; . . ." refers to boyhood, the stage when the poet's *visionary power* was most powerful; the next change came in youth, when nature was all in all; when cataracts haunted him "like a passion"; when all forms and colours in nature were to him "an appetite, a feeling and a love, . . ."

That time had also past—with "all its aching joys . . . And all its dizzy raptures."

Presumably, at both these stages,—boyhood and youth—in spite of the change, the poet is attended by his *visionary power*. From the stage of *sensation*, of elemental unison with nature, to the stage of *feelings*, of "aching joys and dizzy raptures"—the "vision splendid" has undergone a change in its manifestations only. But it remains the prime source, the well-head of his love for nature. The "loss" the poet speaks of in this poem is of that intense absorption, of those joys and raptures of "thoughtless youth." It is a "loss" the poet reckons little of because of the "abundant recompense"—the Vision of *integral harmony* which reigns in universal nature. We have already dealt with it earlier. If the *visionary power* could survive the *first* change from boyhood to youth, there is no reason to suppose that it did not survive the *second*—from youth to maturity, the stage of the Tintern poem.

Let us now turn to the "Ode." Between the first four stanzas—composed within March-June, 1802—and the rest of the poem (early 1804), there was a gap of about two years.<sup>5</sup> But let us take up the "Ode" as a whole to analyse its major thoughts. The

first four stanzas present the inner crisis : Nature is still joyous and beautiful, yet the glory has vanished from the earth, the "celestial light" that had attended him so long is there no more. Stanzas V-VII attempt to probe into the character of the Vision lost and bring in a neo-Platonic thought<sup>6</sup> that he takes up from Coleridge and Henry Vaughan : the soul, "our life's Star," comes "trailing clouds of glory . . . From God, who is our home"; the child is hallowed with the glory of heaven and the "vision splendid" attends it. The light fades as the child grows into youth. "At length the Man perceives, it die away." As Bowra observes, the first part (St., I-IV) presents the crisis ; the second (St., V-VIII) attempts to explain it ; the third and concluding part (St., IX-XI) offers a consolation : though "the radiance . . . once "uphold" and "cherish" us :

Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind ;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be ;  
In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering ;  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

So, the "Ode"<sup>7</sup> begins with a very different "loss" from what "Tintern Abbey" four years earlier has recorded, and opens with a questioning, almost anguished voice. The "Ode" also speaks, at the end, of "recompense" : in the "primal sympathy" ; in the thoughts of "human suffering" ; in the faith that accepts death calmly, wedded to "the philosophic mind." One marks a "loss" and a "recompense" in the two poems separated by four to six summers, yet how *different* are the mood and spirit of the two ! The earlier poem glows with a faith and a Vision that reckons little of the "loss" ; the later deplores it as serious and irrevocable, and seeks to "find strength in what remains behind." "Tintern Abbey" ripples with a secret fount of joy freshly discovered in a mystical awareness of nature's spirit that has taken in "the still, sad music of humanity" ; the "Ode" freezes into a calm fortitude, "a sober colouring," behind which lurks the stoic resignation of a hard Northerner, bred among the rugged mountains, who would not



accept defeat like his friend Coleridge. In the former, human suffering is related to a music that chastens and subdues ; in the latter it brings only soothing thoughts ; in the former the prize is an *integrated vision* ; in the latter there merely flickers a stoic consolation : "In years that bring the philosophic mind." Why this dismal difference, the divergent recompense worlds apart ?

The answer, as I think, is this : the "Ode" laments the loss of the *visionary power*—the bedrock of the poet's imaginative life, the base of his *integral vision*. But what the distressed poet is also dimly aware of—and this is my central point—is that he has lost something more—the *integral vision* as well. As the base disappears, the entire edifice crumbles down. He laments for the flight of the *visionary power*, "the glory and the dream" of childhood ; but what he vaguely apprehends is that the "sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused" has also forsaken him. In "Tintern Abbey" both the power and the vision, held in fine balance, were united in wedlock and the offspring was the "blessed mood" and the "sense sublime." In the "Ode" both are lost. The discordant elements, whatever their nature and source might be, have warped the *music* and made it, or would soon make it after brother John's death in the sea, "harsh" and "grating." Many and various factors, complex and indeterminable and therefore essentially conjectural, may have precipitated it : Coleridge's plight and the "Ode on Dejection" ; the revival of the unfortunate Annette Vallon affair a few weeks before the composition of the "Ode" ; the desire to marry Mary Hutchinson and the mental conflict that ensued ; the possible misgiving that by marriage he would break his vow of self-dedication to poetry ; the fact that human misery and evil were becoming more and more obtrusive.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that somehow the magical harmony of the later *integral vision* was lost and with it faded the breath and inspiration of his creative power as the poems that followed would sadly bear out. And that accounts for the marked *difference* in Wordsworth's response to the two "losses" and for the divergent "recompense" in the two poems. In the Tintern poem the "loss" is followed by a gift of "abundant recompense"—the *integral vision*. In the "Ode" that recompense too is lost. All that remains is a wishful thought to find strength "in years that bring the philosophic mind."

The irony has come full circle : the "thoughts that spring

out of human suffering" fashioned once "the still, sad music"; "the faith that looks through death" was once a poetic faith, the life-breath of poetry. Both are now for ever lost. "The philosophic mind," "the more habitual sway, are poor recompense. For the *music* is heard no more.

An intriguing perspective is lent by the major images on life in the two poems, for they bear the silent impress of this marked transformation in the poet's Vision. Both poems reveal the poet's awareness of life's evils. But it is interesting to observe that while in "Tintern Abbey" the murky images of life and its evils are immediately negated by a triumphant affirmation, are bathed and softened as it were in a flood of light from another world—those in the "Ode" are nakedly harsh. Their gloom is intense and unrelieved. And this is despite the fact that the former is not far removed from the years of "ghastly visions", of "treachery and desertion"; while nearly a decade intervenes between those years and the composition of more than half the "Ode".

"Tintern Abbey" speaks serenely of "the burthen of the mystery", of the "heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world" *lightened* by the "blessed mood"; of "darkness" and "the many shapes of joyless daylight"; of "the fretful stir unprofitable, and the fever of the world"—all negated and toned down by "How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, O sylvan Wye!" In the long last stanza, dark images of suffering and evil loom again, again to be denied or *lightened* :

neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings.

One listens to the soft magical notes of the "still, sad *music*". One discovers the witchery of the *integral vision*. In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth, "so long a worshipper of Nature", comes, despite all his bitter, harsh experiences, "unwearied" in her service with "a far holier love". "The fretful stir unprofitable and the fever of the world" count little before the warmth and glow of his Vision.

But the gloom deepens in the great "Ode" and no contrary light redeems it. Indeed, the imagistic process is curiously reversed :

*light* is now negated by *darkness*. In the fifth stanza the life-imagery comes up, dismal and constricting, wiping out the light from heaven :

Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
Shades of the prison—house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy, . . .

In stanza VIII the Child, 'yet glorious in the might of heaven-born freedom', strives to "provoke the years to bring the inevitable yoke". And this is followed by one of the most vivid and powerful images on life in Wordsworth's poetry :

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

One imagines the frost-heavy, life-deep weight descending on a bewildered poet. From the "heavy and the weary *weight*" *lightened* by the "blessed mood", to the *weight* "heavy as frost . . ."; from the "eye made quite by the *power* of harmony, and the deep power of joy", to the "eye that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality"—is a long and melancholy journey. It is also a measure of the wintry path, the dreary distance Wordsworth has covered from "Tintern Abbey" the "*Ode*" from "the glory and the dream" of Vision—"into the light of common day".

### Notes and References

1. H. Darbishire, *The Poet Wordsworth*, p. 59.
2. For an interesting analysis of the passage by two eminent modern critics, see Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 1947, pp. 191-94, and Leavis's *Revaluation*, 1949, pp. 59-61.
3. Professor Richard H. Fogle's remarks on "the apparent incompleteness of his (Wordsworth's) comparison," in this particular line is *intriguing* :  
'Far more deeply interfused, than what ? One would like to know. But the phrase expresses Wordsworth's Imagination struggling to realize as unity what can only be worded as a dualism of matter and spirit. The unfinished comparison is his expedient and device.'  
( 'A Note on Romantic Oppositions and Reconciliations' in *The Major English Romantic Poets*, Thorpe, Baker and Weaver (ed.), 1957, p. 18).
- I disagree with professor Fogle. "Far more deeply interfused" is *not* an "unfinished comparison." It is an *implied* comparison with the "hour of thoughtless youth." Wordsworth realizes "The dualism of matter and spirit as unity" magnificently (he need not "Struggle" for it ! ) in the same poem earlier, in the "blessed mood" passage.
4. "Tintern Abbey" was written on 13 July 1798. Most of *Prelude*, II was composed in later summer and autumn of 1799.

**5. Bowra writes :**

"The poem was started in the spring of 1802, and by summer the first four stanzas seem to have been completed . . . ; it was completed within two to four years." (*The Romantic Imagination*, 1950, p. 76.)

**F. W. Bateson says :**

"Begun 27th March 1802, added to in May and June, but apparently not completed until 1803 or early 1804" (*Wordsworth, A Reinterpretation*, 1956, p. 160 )

6. Wordsworth wrote in his Fenwick note (1843) : 'It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality . . . I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.'

Bowra comments (*The Romantic Imagination*, 1969, p. 96) : "No doubt when he wrote this, Wordsworth was troubled by the criticism . . . that notion of pre-existence has no warrant in Holy Writ . . . but that he believed it when he wrote the "Ode" is surely beyond all question."

7. We may note in passing the intriguing thesis hardly tenable, of Lionel Trilling and H. M. Margoliouth. In his essay on the "Ode" in *The Liberal Imagination* (ed.), 1942, pp. 129-53), Trilling affirms :

"I believe the 'Ode' is not only, not a dirge sung over departing powers but actually a dedication to new powers."

Margoliouth argues that the fountain-head of the "Ode" is a conflict of Wordsworth celibate, dedicated to poetry, and Wordsworth, about to enter matrimonial life

**8. Some other answers to the "Wordsworthian decline" are :**

(a) "The spirit bloweth where it listeth. When it ceases to blow, or blows but feebly and fitfully, what is a poet to do ?" (H. Darbishire, *The Poet Wordsworth*, 1950, p. 6.)

(b) The secret of Wordsworth's strength was the "vitality of his sensations". "The confiscating years" weakened that vitality and enfeebled his poetry. (H. Sergeant, *The Cumberland Wordsworth* ).

(c) John Jones in his critical study, *The Egoistical Sublime* also traces "the loss of sensibility" to a gradual dulling of his mind brought to a climax by his brother's death (1805).

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**DILIP KUMAR MUKHERJEE**

## IN MEMORIAM

PROFESSOR SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI died on 29 May 1977. His death, even at eighty seven, was premature, for his creative and critical energy was unbedimmed—he was still actively engaged in research on the origin of the *Rāmāyana* and on other diverse subjects. In his reminiscences, a former pupil and colleague aptly quotes Shakespeare: we 'shall not look upon his like again'. He was a savant in the true sense of the term, and while his major concern was the phenomenon of language—spoken and written—he could justly claim all knowledge as his province. And yet his formidable erudition was only one aspect of his many-sided personality, and his heart was as capacious as his intellect.

Professor Chatterji was associated with the post-graduate department of English of the University of Calcutta for many years, and the following essays are our humble tribute to the memory of a great teacher, man of letters and humanist. Several eminent scholars—Indian and foreign—have contributed to this volume, and we are thankful to them for their generous response and co-operation. However, no tribute to Professor Chatterji can be adequate, and we are painfully conscious of our limitations ; but we have at least the assurance that in paying homage to a great man we re-discover our lost heritage, our own humanity.

BHABATOSH CHATTERJEE  
SUBHADRA KUMAR SEN



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## **IN MEMORIAM S. K. C.**

**Qui dum vixit fuit princeps eorum qui scientiam linguarum in hac terra docuere, amatus quoque omnibus quod magnus ipse amator fuerat vitae rerumque omnium. Linguas vero multas amabat, quod vitam ipsam amabat, per scientiam earum scientiam vitae petens. Ut Terentius, nihil humanum a se alienum putabat; solebat autem jucunde loqui ut sapientiam laetitia celare posset.**

**Discipuli quamquam indigni sumus, libro hoc non fortasse in toto indigno laudes ejus celebramus.**

**Pro Facultate Anglica,  
K. D. BOSE.**



## SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI : IN AND OUT OF THE UNIVERSITY

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SUKUMAR SEN

IT IS well known that Suniti Kumar Chatterji was a profound scholar and that his scholarship extended far and wide over his own specialized field of study. But as a man he did not show in his behaviour the least of the expected crust of solidity of scholarship which is usually found even in scholars of a much lesser calibre.

Sunitibabu's—I still like to call him Sunitibabu, although he was my guru—personality was unforbidding in approach by any man from any walk of life. There was always a warmth of subtle welcome in his attitude to life. He was approachable by anyone. (It was however not always convenient to him. As a matter of fact his amiability and politeness thwarted his academic activities.)

Sunitibabu was a very likeable man and he had no enemy worth the name. (Toward the end of his life he happened to provoke the wrath of some religious fanatics by some of his observations on the *Ramayana*. This was perhaps his only bitter experience of unreasonable hostility and malice.) Anyway we may say that Sunitibabu was one of that very rare group of our outstanding men who had fortunately enjoyed uninterrupted popularity. He was not a good speaker nor a politician. He belonged to no religious group or sect. He was revered for his scholarship and profession. And his popularity sprang from it.

Professor Chatterji was interested in almost everything that has been achieved by man in thought and deed from the early days since when prehistory has succeeded in revealing it. In the later years he was often heard quoting Terrence : *homo sum homini nihil a me alienum puto*.

He was deeply interested in the phenomenon of speech as it is the greatest achievement of men ; as a matter of fact it is Speech that has made man from out of the ape. The next subject he was interested in was ancient history. Linguistics and history are closely associated with ethnology specially in India as it is the place where many races and tribes speaking many tongues have met, combined or lived more or less apart

in peace. Sunitibabu became interested in Greek history and culture—especially in Greek art and literature—when he was a first year student at Scottish Churches where he had the opportunity of reading with renowned professors like Bipinbehari Sen and Adhar Chandra Mukherji. In his senior college years he read with professors M. Ghosh and H. M. Percival of Presidency College from whom (specially from Ghosh) he imbibed a lasting love for Greek language and literature. His taste for European classics combined with his special field of study for the M.A. degree—Old English and Anglo-Saxon Philology—made him forsake the study of classical history and take up the study of Germanic and Indo-European linguistics. He did not study Linguistics for job-hunting as most of the scholars of the day now ; it was his normal course of studies that opened to him the gates of the science of speech.

Sunitibabu was deeply interested in human behaviour and was therefore interested in the Bengali stage. It is well known how he had helped in his college days the successful amateur performances of D. L. Roy's *Chandragupta* at Calcutta University Institute by his friends Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Naresh Chandra Mitra and others. Years later when Bhaduri had left college teaching and adopted stage-acting as his profession, Sunitibabu was helpful to him in the staging of Jogesh Chandra Chaudhury's *Sita* which was undoubtedly one of Bhaduri's great stage successes.

Sunitibabu was as much interested in uttered speech as in the written word. He could recite very well poetry—English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian etc. In his student days he had won medals and prizes for recitation at contests organized by the Calcutta University Institute.

Sunitibabu had a brilliant academic career. He passed the Entrance Examination (1907) in the first division securing a senior government scholarship, from Seal's Free College and the First Arts Examination (1909) with the same brilliance from Scottish Church College. He passed the B.A. Examination (1911) from Presidency College with honours in English standing first (? or second). He obtained the M.A. degree in English (Group B) standing first in the first class. (In English [Group A] his rival was Miss Regina Guha who stood second [? or first] in the B.A. list.)

In those days the University could nominate one or two of her best students for the higher administrative services under the Government. Sunitibabu and his family would have liked nothing better. But that was not to be. His extreme myopia stood in the way of any Government appointment. The other honourable profession left for the educated was

the law. But Sunitibabu had not read law as he had no liking for it. So he had to take to the last but not undesirable profession left to an alumnus of the University—that of a college teacher. Soon after his passing the M.A. Examination he was invited to join the faculty of English at Vidyasagar College which was then called Metropolitan Institution, the first non-Government college affiliated to the University and established by Vidyasagar. His friend Sisir Kumar Bhaduri was already there in the same faculty. In Metropolitan Institution Sunitibabu worked for a few months. In 1914 he was called by Asutosh Mukherji to join the teaching section of the University which was started in 1910 by the new University Act, for which thanks must be given to Lord Curzon among others. Sunitibabu was appointed an assistant to Professor Knox, one of the two University professors in English (the other professor being Henry Stephen, a name held in veneration by at least two generations of graduates and post-graduates of the University). In 1917, on the strength of the report of the Sadler Commission, the government persuaded by Asutosh Mukherji sanctioned the establishment of the Post-graduate Teaching and Research Department. This was the most significant incident in the history of the University since its establishment in 1855. Chatterji was now a lecturer in the department of English headed by Professor Stephen. In the meanwhile he had come in touch with Haraprasad Shastri and Rakhal Das Banerji, the old veteran and the young brilliance, and became interested in the historical study of the Bengali language. He had done good preliminary work and submitted his result for a Premchand Roychand Studentship. In 1919 he was awarded a Government of India scholarship for higher study in Sanskrit to be pursued in Great Britain. Sunitibabu left Calcutta for London (September 1919).

The School of Oriental Studies was established in London a few years ago for conducting intensive study and research in Oriental (i.e. non-European) language, literature and history. He joined that Institution and after a year of study was enrolled for the degree of Doctor of literature. The theme of his research was the history of the Bengali language. He also enrolled for the Diploma in Phonetics under the great phonetician Daniel Jones, the discoverer of the phoneme and other niceties of Modern Phonetics. He attended classes in Germanic Philology and Indology also. Dr L. D. Barnett was his research guide.

Sunitibabu was awarded the Diploma in Phonetics and produced one of his small but outstanding works in Bengali Linguistics and Phonetics : *A Brief Sketch of Bengali Phonetics*. It was published in the *Bulletin* of the school (1922) and reprinted many times as a pamphlet. It still

retains its value as a text book. Sunitibabu's doctoral thesis was a bulky volume with quotations from languages showing a variety of scripts, and so he was permitted to submit handwritten copies instead of the type-written or printed. The thesis was accepted—Sir George A. Grierson was one of the examiners—and he was awarded the degree (1921). The Government of India extended his scholarship for another year and he spent it in Paris. At Sorbonne he was enrolled as a student under Jules Bloch. He would have liked to get the doctor's diploma of Paris University, but his teacher Bloch advised him against it. Professor Bloch said that one Doctor's degree was enough, two would only belittle both. Sunitibabu was greatly benefited by his sojourn in Paris. He had the chance of attending lectures of Antoine Meillet, the greatest name in the field of linguistics at the time who was then engaged in his researches in Indo-European prosody. Among other masters whose lectures Chatterji had the chance to attend in Paris was Jean Przyluski who had done pioneer work in non-Indo-European linguistics. In September 1922 Sunitibabu returned home after fully qualifying himself as a master in Phonetics and Indian Linguistics.

A few months before his return home, Calcutta University had received an endowment of five lacs of rupees from Guruprasad Singh, the Raja of Khaira in Behar. Asutosh Mukherji who was then the Vice-Chancellor established on the endowment some chairs in Science and Arts, one of which was the chair in Phonetics. Sunitibabu had been appointed to the chair before he returned to Calcutta. He joined the University in October 1922 as one of the youngest University Professors.

At that time the term of appointment of University professors (whose salary came from the Government or from Endowments) was for five years which could be extended further by terms of five years. The University lecturers were then appointed from year to year as their salary depended on the annual grant to the University voted annually by the legislature. The Minister of Education at that time belonged to the opponent group which had not liked the establishment of the Post-graduate department which they thought to be a move for degrading their alma mater Presidency College. It was during the Vice-Chancellorship of Justice Edward Greaves that the term of appointment of teachers was made by terms of five years and the professors were made permanent after the probationary period of the first five years. Sunitibabu was therefore made permanent at the end of his first term of five years. There is one incident which is interesting and I do not think it is to be found in any official record of the University except the files which I am afraid may not be available. The University

no doubt at the instance of Lord Hardinge, the Chancellor—had bestowed an honorary doctoral degree on Rabindranath Tagore on the eve of the award of the Nobel Prize, but Tagore still continued to be a *persona non grata* to many of the members of the University. When the M. A. course in Bengali was introduced (1919) the University consulted most of the eminent literary men except Rabindranath Tagore. He was not yet accepted by the University as the best of Bengali poets and writers. But a change was noticed from 1921 when Asutosh Mukherji tried to bring Tagore in close touch with the University. Tagore was awarded the newly endowed Bhuvanmohini Medal (1921); he was asked to deliver some readership lectures; and his name was included among the permanent members of the Board of Management of the Khaira Endowment. At the meeting of the Board of Management of the Khaira Endowment when Sunitibabu's term of appointment came up for extension, Rabindranath Tagore was present. Sunitibabu was made permanent. (I saw Tagore come out of the Syndicate Room after the meeting. Later I had confirmation from Sunitibabu.) This is to my knowledge the only occasion when Tagore took part in any official business of the University except delivering the Convocation Address in 1937.

Sunitibabu as a University Professor began to hold classes from the end of October or beginning of November 1922 when the post-puja term began. At first he held classes in Comparative philology, English (Group B), Sanskrit, Pali, Bengali and other vernaculars that were taught for the M.A. degree. Towards the later part of his days at the University, he held classes in Persian, French and Islamic History and Culture also. Besides he took the Phonetic classes for the Certificate and Diploma courses that were held in the evening. As a Professor and head of a department he could take as few as four periods a week only. Instead he held more than twelve. This is unthinkable now in the days when professors are by no means rare birds in a University.

Fortunately Sunitibabu had persuaded Asutosh Mukherji to undertake the publication of his doctoral thesis from the University. It was a costly affair and its printing took about two years. Chatterji's *Magnum Opus Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* was published in two fat volumes in 1926. The price was ridiculously low—Rupees Twenty only and only 500 copies were printed. The result was that neither Sunitibabu nor the University did derive any financial benefit from it. (But the second-hand booksellers collected rich harvest until very recently. In the sixties a copy of ODBL would easily fetch ten



times its original price.) But both the author and the University were more than compensated for the financial loss. The work established the fame of the author in Europe and America as a top-ranking linguist and the name of the University as a real centre of advanced studies in the subject. *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* had, as its core, the doctoral thesis submitted to London University, but what came out of the press was a cyclopaedia of Indo-Aryan linguistics which contains in essence almost all that had been done on the subject as well as Chatterji's own contribution to it. The book has been accepted as the most authoritative text-book in the subject and it has directed since all the fruitful attempts done towards the historical survey and analysis of Indo-Aryan modern languages other than Bengali. Sunitibabu wrote his *magnum opus* after the lines indicated in Jules Bloch's *Formation de la langue Marathe* (1915 ?); he did not merely produce a 'Formation of the Bengali Language' but an historical grammar of the Bengali language imbedded in an Outline of Comparative Grammar of Indo-Aryan. It was therefore not a single book but a group of many. For the student of the history of Indo-Aryan language Chatterji's *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* is indispensable.

His special contributions to Indo-Aryan linguistics were the following :

1. He gave a complete analysis and description of the phonemes of Bengali (Standard Colloquial).
2. He worked out the phonemic structure of the language throughout his history.
3. He gave good etymology for some important Bengali and other Indo-Aryan words.
4. He presented a scientific analysis of the morphology of the Bengali language.
5. He has thrown brilliant side-lights on some of the phonetic and morphemic characteristics of Indo-Aryan languages other than Bengali.
6. Chatterji was a master phonetician.

After the publication of his *magnum opus* Sunitibabu practically discarded researching into the Bengali language and his only subsequent contribution in this field was his Bengali Grammar (in Bengali) which was written as a text-book and published by the University (1939). It is true that his teaching commitments were heavy but that need not have stopped his research activities. But with his growing reputation as a

versatile scholar he found himself involved in various cultural activities and there was little time for concentrated research activity. It is highly regrettable that the author of the *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* produced only half a dozen books and pamphlets of some importance—he of course published many scores of interesting papers on linguistic and cultural topics. Among his significant contributions are *Indo-Aryan and Hindi*, a very useful text book, his lectures on the Rajasthan Language, and *Kiratajanakriti*, an illuminating book on the contribution of the Non-Indo-European Kirata people to the overall culture of India.

As a teacher Sunitibabu was conscientious and dutiful, but the general run of his pupils (in two generations) did get little benefit from his lectures as they lacked the minimum enthusiasm for the subject because of their lack of basic knowledge in the languages or languages they read. Of course a few benefited from the lectures and that was perhaps enough.

Sunitibabu was popular among his colleagues. His simple and easy manners, unostentatious behaviour and the native dress went a long way to increase and sustain his popularity. The authorities of the University however generally fought shy of him. He was nominated a member of the Senate only for one term (when Jadunath Sarkar was the Vice-Chancellor) but he was dropped in the next term. The powers that controlled the University recognized his erudition but did not like to share power with him.

Rabindranath Tagore was attracted to Sunitibabu for his erudition, culture and simplicity and Tagore's friendship uplifted his cultural and artistic conceptions and thoughts. Tagore often consulted him when there was any doubt in any linguistic matter. (It may not be known to many that Tagore was the only Bengali [i.e. non-European] who had made definite contribution to Bengali linguistics, tackling problems that had escaped the notice of scholars before him.) Tagore asked him to join his party when he visited Indonesia and Siam (1926). Tagore's companionship during the tour greatly benefited Sunitibabu. It blossomed up the literary talent that was lying dormant in him.

Sunitibabu was a good writer of Bengali. He had a style of his own. The literary master that influenced him at first was Pramatha Chaudhuri, a great stylist in Bengali. Sunitibabu attended the *salon* of Mr and Mrs Chaudhuri and his first significant essay in Bengali was published in Chaudhuri's journal, the unique *Sabuj-patra*. Since the

publication of *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* he wrote many articles in Bengali (and also in English) on topics connected with language, literature and culture. Although excellent articles, the language of these papers did not reveal that Sunitibabu had in him the essentials of a literary artist. When he published his *Dvipamay Bharat*, a travelogue that was more than a travelogue based on his tour of Indonesia and Siam in the entourage of Tagore, he was hailed as a good writer of Bengali by Tagore himself. Tagore also thought that Sunitibabu had in him the making of a true novelist. His subsequent travelogues—*Europe* (1938) and others—as well as his autobiographical sketch-books *Path-Calti* (2 Vols.) justify his claim to be recognised as a stylist in the Bengali language. Sunitibabu loved the visual art—sculpture and painting—more than the contemplative literature. His artistic taste was not confined to the Indian and the European only. He was to my knowledge one of the greatest admirers of native African art. His collection of books on art is one of the best in Calcutta, private or public.

Sunitibabu resigned from the University to join the Upper House of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly as its president (1952-1965). There he was for about a dozen years. But he did not give up his real profession—teaching—altogether. Whenever he could he attended as a faculty member the Summer Schools of Linguistics that were held in Poona, Mysore, Coimbatore and other places (1953-1960). Before he had left the services of the University he had attended several sessions of International Conferences in Linguistics, Phonetics and Indology in Europe and America. He was a widely travelled man and he liked travelling.

In the middle sixties there came a happy release from the halter of politics which he did neither understand nor care for. He was appointed in 1965 a National Professor and he chose the happiest name for his chair—National Professor in Humanities. A few years ago he had been elected the President of the International Phonetic Association where he succeeded his teacher, the great Daniel Jones. It is a matter of deep satisfaction that he died at the age of 87 in treble harness, as a National Professor, as the chairman of Sahitya Akademi and as the President of the International Phonetic Association. What more is desirable for a man of action and thought?

Sunitibabu was an institution by himself. Like a banyan tree he did extend the shade of his erudition and good nature and thereby bringing satisfaction to many. He died at the ripe age but he could have

continued to live actively for half a dozen years or more. To many of us the sudden demise of Sunitibabu is as unexpectedly tragic as the uprooting of a banian tree in a spell of cyclone.

Sunitibabu loved life, the life that was easy and free, warm and harmonious. He was not a religious man as we understand by the term, but he did not spurn the religious ideas which were to him a part of his inheritance as a man and as an Indian. He had firm faith in the power or the Principle that guides Life through eternity. He was a simple man and it is from simple men that saints emerge.

## THE HELLENISM OF AN INDIAN HUMANIST\*

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ANIL KUMAR KANJILAL

AN INTERNATIONALIST and a humanist, like Rabindranath Tagore, Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji has been a Philhellenist since his early manhood. His philhellenism is not something apart from, but an organic part of, and derives from, his humanism, which is universal. This universal humanism he imbibed in his college days from his acquaintance, on the one hand, with the literature of ancient India in Sanskrit and, on the other, with the literatures of ancient and modern Europe mainly through the medium of English. It was subsequently fostered by his intimate association with Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest exponent in the modern world of Universal Religion of Man.

Yes, Professor Chatterji's humanism is universal, it admits of no discrimination between colours and races, castes or creeds ; it refuses to acquiesce in the incompatibility of the fundamentals of human cultures evolved by human beings of diverse races and faiths in the course of their struggles throughout the ages in different lands and in different milieus for a better human environment, a better and higher human life, a finer aesthetic sensibility and a superior spiritual consciousness. Professor Chatterji views human civilisation as a single integral whole, and he has a genuine faith in and feeling for Universal Humanity. Because of this he evinces deep interest in all peoples, ancient and modern, and in all cultures and religions. He has always been an ardent believer in 'Unity in Diversities,' and his life's mission has been since his college days to seek for this Unity in the sum total of human experiences acquired by diverse peoples at different times in different lands and handed down in different forms as a common legacy for Modern Man, jointly to share, to conserve and to enrich. This faith in 'Unity in Diversities'—this catholicity of outlook and interests—is a reflex of the spirit of ancient Indian philosophy of the Vedanta, and is linked with Taoism, with ancient Greek and modern European humanism, with esoteric Hebraism, and with Islamic *Taşawwuf* or Sufism.

\* Written in September 1974.

His interest in foreign peoples and cultures, and his genuine love for Man took him, as an enthusiastic pilgrim, to distant lands : to Mexico and West Africa, to Mongolia and Indonesia, to Egypt and China, to Russia and the Baltic Lands, to the West Indies and the Caucasus region, to Ethiopia and Scandinavia, and of course, to Greece. He visited Greece for the first time in 1922, as a student, and described in a short letter in Bengali (published the same year in the celebrated Bengali literary journal the *Sabuj Patra* or 'the Green Leaf,' edited by the eminent critic and man of letters, Pramatha Chaudhuri) his joyful experiences of the journey he undertook from Athens to Sparta (through the Corinthian Canal by steamer to Itea and Delphi by carriage, and then on horseback down to the sea, crossing the Gulf of Corinth to Patras, and then by train to Olympia ; and from Olympia on pony to the village of Zevgholation where he took his train to Sparta). This is the earliest reference to Greece to be noticed in the vast extent of Professor Chatterji's writings spreading over half a century of active literary life. Since then he has paid several visits to Greece—in 1966, 1967, and 1974—and on every occasion he spent hours among the ruins of the Acropolis in Athens, and in other places, and these were, as he emphatically declares, "hours of exaltation and ecstasy" for him—to be roaming among the ruins of the Parthenon, only where, according to Ernest Renan, one can see artistic perfection. Professor Chatterji is equally moved by the ancient and medieval Indian achievements, as in Bharhut and Sanchi, Amaravati and Nagarjuni-konda, Mahabalipuram and Ellora and Elephanta, as well as by Chinese Buddhist rock sculptures at Yun Kang and Lung Men, besides Borobudur and Prambanan of Java : and Chinese palaces in Peking, Nanking, Suchow, Hankow and Canton, and Japanese Shinto Shrines at Geku and Naigu ; and of course by the little that he could see of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian art and sculpture in the various museums of Europe. He also visited the ancient Aztec and Maya and other art and architecture in Mexico—Tenochtitlan, Teotihuacan, Mitla, Tehuantepec, Uxmal, and in other places in Yucatan. The cathedrals of Europe—Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Russian, as well as the great mosques of India, Iran, Istanbul and Egypt were another source of perennial joy for him.

Professor Chatterji has made the great culture of the ancient Greeks almost a part of his intellectual and spiritual being. In this he partly received his inspiration from his teacher Professor Manmohan Ghosh, who was an enthusiastic Hellenist (see Professor Chatterji's English Paper "My Teachers—Homage to their Memory" in the *Educational*

*Quarterly*, Ministry of Education, Government of India, September 1966, pp.6-15). Professor Chatterji has always been an admirer of Greek literature and art as well as of Greek thought. For well over thirty years (1922-52), he regularly taught at the post-graduate level in the University of Calcutta, Homeric and Classical Greek, side by side with other sister classical Indo-European languages, like Vedic, Pali, Pahlavi, Gothic, Old English etc. He became further interested in the Baltic languages (see his book *Balts and Aryans : In their Indo-European Background*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, India, 1968), and also in Armenian and Old Celtic. Among the ten 'Literary Complexes,' which Professor Chatterji considers to be fundamentally the most important and greatest creations of humanity, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Homeric hymns, the *Homeric*, the works of Hesiod, and Greek tragedies form, according to him, one single complex (see his *World Literature and Tagore*, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India, 1971, pp. 56-62).

Professor Chatterji has named his residential house, built in 1933, *Sudharmā*. This, in Sanskrit, means the special heaven where all the gods and goddesses, sages and saints assemble. It is what would be known as *Pantheon* in Greek. Here, in this house, along with a fairly big collection of books (over 30,000 volumes) on Indian and Greek as well as other ancient literatures, one can see also a veritable assemblage of the deities and heroes and heroines and personalities of ancient Greece and India. It is as if the immortal divinities have found their last sanctuary on the second floor of Professor Chatterji's house after their "glorious dwellings" have fallen and their heavenly preoccupations gone. It often happens that a pupil or a friend of his or a chance visitor to the *Sudharmā*, finds the young Professor of 85 occupied with narrating to a stranger in the presence of the immortal deities the wonderful stories of their rise and fall, their romance and tragedy, and their relations with Man—all their marvels and miracles, in words that almost bring the dead back to life, and at the end of his narration, reciting the words of the Last Oracle at Delphi—

eipate tō(i) basilēi, khamai pede daidaies aula.  
ouketi Phoibos ekhei kaluban, ou mantida daphnēn.  
ou pagan laleousan. apesbeto kai lalon hudōr.

Professor Chatterji's love and admiration for ancient Greece has been an absorbing passion with him. In his review (published in the Bengali Monthly *Prabāsi*, 1923, pp. 646-49) of a big book in Bengali on

*Socrates* by a senior colleague of his in Calcutta University, Professor Rajani Kanta Guha, Professor Chatterji has stated that if he were given an option to be reborn, he would select, outside of India, only one country, and that is ancient Greece—the city of Athens of the fifth century B. C. While describing the different ways of thought and different ways of life evolved by different peoples in different parts of the world in the course of the history of human civilisation, Professor Chatterji thus interprets his concept of *Hellenism* i.e. *the Way of Life and Way of Thought* which is specifically Greek :

“This Hellenism expresses itself in the following matters. The Hellenes or the Greeks of antiquity, in the consciousness of us moderns, were a people who were actuated by a unique sense of beauty in connexion with whatever came within their purview ; and in their gymnasiums, and emulating also the ancient Egyptians, they studied the human body and were particularly moved by the beauty of the human form. The ancient Indians (and following them other peoples in Asia who came within the orbit of Indian Civilisation like the Indonesians) had also a similar feeling of interest, with an austere or a luxuriant approach, in the body of men and women. Herein the Greek sense however was supreme. Not only did they see the beauty of man’s and woman’s body, and were sort of intoxicated with it and represented it to perfection in their sculpture and other art, but they also wanted equally to make the surroundings of the body beautiful. Greek sculpture and architecture, Greek painting as on their vases, Greek coins, and all other Greek art small or great bear the stamp of a desire to realise a transcendent beauty ; and this was the Greek’s great contribution to life. Even the common things of life which would be ignored by other peoples, for example the drapery with which they adorned their human figures in sculpture, had a supreme beauty and truth. There was a sense of perfect order and balance combined with sensitive beauty ; and there was a ‘high seriousness’ combined with a deep mysticism, with a restraint and reticence rather than exuberance and abandon, which we find in both Greek art and literature. The ancient Greeks were for moderation—for ‘nothing too much’—and it was against their nature to go to extremes and indulge in exaggeration. In Greek art there is no lack of power to



portray the grotesque and the unnatural. But there was no particular obsession for these with the Greeks. The Greeks, again, had very great love for freedom, and they had a very sane sense of human values, and this found expression in their democratic attitude and their political institutions. This, however, was contradicted by the ancient Greeks permitting the institution of slavery to flourish. But as contrasted with the Romans and many other peoples, the Greek treatment of their slaves was eminently reasonable and humane, and they could also fully appreciate the humaneness of the ancient Indian attitude to slavery. Social well-being of man in his corporate existence was another great ideal of the Greeks, and this made the Greeks the first thinkers in political science, side by side with the ancient Indians—with this difference, however, that the Greeks looked at politics from the point of view of democracy and the ancient Indian political theorists and thinkers (like Kāuṭilya) expressed the standpoint of a benevolent despotism with full consideration of the happiness of the people. The Greeks were inspired by both awe and curiosity in their approach to Nature. While the first led to the development of Greek Philosophy, the second was the foundation of Greek Science; and Greek Science is of course the basis of modern science. The Greeks were also very *interested in Man as Man*, and they felt a very great curiosity and a deep interest in Man, just because he was their brother man.

“The Greek approach to Man was simple and direct, and rather different from the philosophical approach which is the basis of Indian Humanism. According to the Indian point of view, man should be interested in man since the other man is his *alter ego*, his other soul. Every human soul or personality is a part of the expression of the Supreme Spirit, and therefore all individuals are part of the same whole : *yatra jīvas, tatra Śivaḥ* : ‘wherever there is life, there is the Supreme’. So man’s interest in man is a part of the realisation of his proper self, in the Indian approach. When in the 17th century the English thinker put the question : ‘For whom the Bell tolls ?’ and gave his reply to it, his idea was in accordance with the Indian one : no man is an island

unto himself—individual men are but parts of one great continent of All-Man, and therefore when one dies or suffers, all others are also affected.

“This interest in man among the Greeks was responsible for giving to civilised humanity one of its great inheritances, that of *Humanism*, its *Sense of Humanity*. The Greeks called this attitude of interest and sympathy for man *Anthrōpotēs*, and the Romans translated this word into Latin as *Humanitas*; and with the lead of Rabindranath and other thinkers of India, this has been translated into Sanskrit as *Mānavikatā*. This in the first instance is based on a sense of Oneness of Mankind; and although the Greeks, considering the age, were pardonably conscious of their own superiority in many matters when they looked at other peoples, and had an understandable pride of race, (regarding all other peoples, howsoever civilised or advanced, as *Barbarians*, people whose language and ways they did not understand), yet they were eager to learn from everyone and to benefit by their contacts. They always acknowledged that they were a young people, and consequently were the inheritors of what the older peoples had left behind them. Finally, the Greeks had a deep sense of the Ultimate Reality which we see in their thinkers, when during the first millennium before Christ the Greek Philosophers were first groping in their attempts to interpret the riddle of life; and specially from the second half of this millennium, philosophers like Socrates and Plato, Epictetus and others tried to give a rational interpretation of existence, and chalked out what they considered to be the civilised man’s way of thought and behaviour. All these notions and ideas which were cultivated by the Greeks and attempted to be put into practice in their life are brought together within the epithet of *Hellenism*. It is not that these ideas were the exclusive possession of the ancient Greeks alone—civilised men everywhere would agree with them and accept them. But the ancient Greeks, as a people, affected these ideas in their lives, and they doubly underlined them, so to say, in their culture. That is why we call these ideals in their sum-total *Hellenism*.” (See *Indianism and the Indian Synthesis*, Calcutta University, 1962, pp. 41-44; also *Africanism: The African Personality*, Bengal Publishers,

Calcutta, 1960, pp. 30ff. ; as well as the papers 'The Basic Unity underlying the Diversity of Culture', published in the *Inter-relations of Culture*, UNESCO, 1953, pp. 158-83, and 'National Cultures and National Attitudes to the World', published in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* (New Series), Vols. 31 and 32, 1956 and 1957, First Edition 1959, pp. 20-37).

To Professor Chatterji this *Hellenism*, as a distinctive product of the Human Mind within the Hellenic environment, is, in essence, quite compatible with *Indianism* or *Bhārata-dharma*, which is a distinctive product of the same Human Mind within the Indian environment, the two together forming a harmonious whole. Professor Chatterji compares the elusive *Urvaśī* of Vedic mythology with the fatal *Cytherea* of Greek myths, and his unerring insight reveals to him the basic identity of *Urvaśī* as re-conceived by Rabindranath in his celebrated Bengali hymn *Urvaśī* and *Aphroditē* as conceived by Sophocles and Euripides (See the Bengali paper 'Rabindranāthēr Jivana-Dēvatā' first published 1949, revised and reprinted in the first volume of *Sāṃskṛitīkī*, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 215-34, and again in the *Maniṣī Smaraṇē*, Jijñāsa, Calcutta, 1972, pp. 95-111). An Indian student of aesthetics cannot but wonder at the revelation of the affinity between the concepts of Supreme Love and Beauty of the great poets of ancient Hellas and the greatest poet of modern India, when Professor Chatterji quotes the words of the Greek poets in English translation :

My children, of a surety *Cypris* is  
 Not *Cypris* only, but bears many a name :  
 Death is her name, and Night imperishable,  
 And maniac Frenzy, and unallayed Desire,  
 And Lamentation loud. All is in her :  
 Impulse, and Quietude, and Energy ;  
 For in the bosoms of all souls that breathe  
 This Goddess is installed. Who is not prey  
 For her ? She penetrates the watery tribe  
 Of fishes ; she is in the four-legged breed  
 Of the dry land : in birds her wing bears sway,  
 In brutes, in mortals, in the Gods on high...  
 ...without spear,  
 Without a sword, *Cypris* cuts short all counsels  
 Both human and divine.

(From Sophocles, translated by Sir George Young)

She ranges with the stars of eve and morn,  
She wanders in the heaving of the sea,  
And all life lives from her—Aye, this is she  
That sows Love's seed and brings Love's fruit to birth ;  
And great Love's brethern are all we on earth !

(From Euripides, translated by Gilbert Murray)

In short prefaces to the two Bengali books by Mohini Mohan Mukherji—*Iskāilās* (1948) and *Sōphōklēs* (1949)—Professor Chatterji records his appreciation of the greatness of poetic genius of the two stalwarts of ancient Greece. In these days of negation of all values and faiths and collapse of all hope in man's future, Professor Chatterji derives mental peace and solace from the benign message enshrined in the great words of ancient Greek Masters, which he is happy to find to be in perfect harmony with the universal message of Love and Beauty and Truth pronounced by the ancient poets and sages of India in a divine language kindred to that of ancient Hellas viz. the speech of the Vedas of India. In a Bengali article (*Grik Kavi Euripidēs-ēr duiṭi Vāṇi* printed in the monthly *Udbōdhan*, 1941, pp. 535-38) he quotes two such messages from Euripides—one from *Hippolutos Stephanēphoros* and the other from *Trōiades*—and explains their great beauty and significance, and their validity even for modern man whose emotions have almost dried up and who is spiritually famished and is in need of mental and moral sustenance to be able to survive as Man.

**hē mega moi ta theōn meledēmāth'**

hotan phrenas elthē(i),

**lupas parairei.**

**ksunesin de tin' elpidi keuthōn**

**leipomai en te tukhais thnatōn kai en ergmasi leussōn.**

*(Hippolutos)*

**ō gēs okhēma, k'api gēs ekhōn hedran.**

**hostis pot' ei su, dustopastos eidenai :**

**Zeus, eit' Anagkē phuseos, eite Nous brotōn—**

prosēuksamēn se' panta gar di' apsophou

**bainōn keleuthou kata Dikēn ta thnēt' ageis. (Trōiades)**

Professor Chatterji discovers his kindred spirit in Euripides, the most modern poet of ancient Greece, whose poetry reveals to him, in artistic image of superb beauty, an intellectual attitude, and a commentary

on Life, which he can accept as his own. In the words of the Chorus of Dionysiac Maenads in the *Bakkhai* (1005 ff.), which he quotes in his *World Literature and Tagore* (p. 14), Professor Chatterji reads a great message—a message that offers a positive meaning, a tangible aim of of Human Life, the *Summum Bonum*, which a sane man with a sense of the Ultimate Reality in him can hopefully accept and faithfully adhere to :

to sophon ou phthonō(i)  
khairō thēreuosa,  
ta d'hetera, megala phanera t'ont' aei ;  
epi ta kala bion  
emar eis nukta t'euagount' eusebein,  
ta d'eksō nomima dikas ekbalon-  
ta timan theous.

Professor Chatterji, without being a scholar of Greek, appreciates a quotation from the Greek alright, and even at 85 he enjoys reciting from memory—which has never failed him—his favourite lines from the Greek in the Roman script in his own hand and bound up into a neat volume, that he keeps by his bedside for ready use and carries with him while on tour. Professor Chatterji delivered, some years back, a course of lectures in Bengali on Greek sculpture, which has not yet been published in book form, but is preserved in its draft covering more than 60 pages. This he intends to take up soon and develop into a monograph, a fair copy having already been prepared under his direct supervision. When completed and published, it will be a unique contribution of Indian scholarship, first of its kind, to the study of Greek Art from the Indian point of view. The motto of his life Professor Chatterji has got inscribed on a wall of a room in the ground-floor of his house : it is a quotation from Terence—

*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto—*  
which is an echo in Latin of Menander's Greek—  
*Oudeis esti moi allotrios,.. hē phusis mia pantōn*  
which, again, is a variant of the Sanskrit  
*Udāra-caritānām tu, Vasudhāiva Kuṭumbakam—*

“For those who are of a broad way of life, the whole world is Kin”.

# A MANY-SPLENDoured PERSONALITY

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DEVdAS SEN

## I

IMAGINE an unorthodox Bengali Brahmin—free from pride and prejudice—permitting nobody to touch his feet in reverence, though himself always modest, even deferential, while talking even to his youngest pupil ; one caring as much for brawn as for brains ; strong and agile, with a sound mind in a sound body at eighty-seven ; tolerant but not timorous ; an Indian to the core and yet a citizen of the world ; moving as freely in the world of action as in the world of thought ; feeling equally at home in the library and the Legislative Council, an international conference and a third class compartment in a railway train ; one with original views on so many subjects, but never trying to impose them on others ; one who knows no compromise with untruth, and—*exemplifying his own precept*—“never walks when he can run, never stands when he can walk, never sits when he can stand, never lies down when he can sit” ; a great lover who loves *all* beautiful things ; a perfect gentleman who never inflicts pain, or gets fussy when making a gift !

Such was Suniti Kumar Chatterji, teacher, polymath, researcher, thinker, author, traveller, polyglot, conversationalist—and what not, but above all, a man, of whom it would certainly not be an exaggeration to say, in the words of Horatio, we “shall not look upon his like again.” To know him was itself liberal education.

Rich in qualities of the *head*, Dr Chatterji was perhaps richer in qualities of the *heart*. His life teems with instances of large-heartedness and generosity : (a) Was a young enthusiast badly in need of a book or a curio ? Well, Professor Chatterji at once made a gift of it to him. (b) Did a post-graduate student, occupying a front seat in the class-room, had before him, with pages wide open, a second-hand copy of Wright's *Old English Grammar*, duly purchased, at an incredibly low price, from one of the bookstalls in College Street, with little knowledge that it had been filched from his professor ? Dr Chatterji had an amused look at the volume, explained the whole ‘episode’ and—much to the embarrassment

of the student, of course—refused to deprive him of the bargain. (c) Was a hapless, abducted girl, rescued from Noākhāli and brought over to Calcutta, to be settled down to married life? The Brahmin professor at once volunteered his services as a priest at the wedding. (d) Even a servant's illness would so upset him that he would personally look after him. (e) Testimonials from his pen were never of the common sort which—to use Pope's well-known expression—"damn with faint praise."

## II

It is no light or easy task to talk on so eminent and so many splendoured a personality as Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, whom I had known ever since 1938,—first as my teacher, then as colleague, and later as adviser and guide. To the layman Dr Chatterji was perhaps best known for two things—his passion for language and linguistics and his epicurean relish for good food. As for his *liking for titbits*, all that need be said is that his hospitality outdid his relish for good food, both being part of something much wider—namely, his enjoyment of all that is good and beautiful in life. As for his *passion for language*, that he was first and foremost an outstanding language scholar is beyond question, but when one has said this about him, one has not said enough. For if language was his abiding passion, so too was art. And he had so many other interests as well—history and sociology, philosophy and religion, archaeology and anthropology, literature and culture, manners and morals, legends and customs, folk songs and ballads, music and the theatre,—and what not! Indeed the range or extent of his knowledge was as amazing as its depth or intensity. And all this vast and varied scholarship never became a dead weight with him; rather, it radiated life and charm in a manner rarely to be found in our tribe.

Our professor had an unfailing sense of humour and a gift for felicitous coinage. In him genius and geniality of temperament went hand in hand, as did plain living and high thinking, fearlessness and humility, enthusiasm and sobriety.

He was a wonderful talker—roaming freely over an infinite variety of topics, ranging from architecture to intonation, from orthography to Africanism, from sculpture to idioms, from an antique custom to a modern fad, from sartorial fashions in the reign of Chandragupta

to the art of cooking in Mexico ! And with all his passion for detail, he never lost the wood in the trees.

If his conversation was at once feast of reason and flow of soul, so too were his letters. His gift for letter-writing is perhaps not known to many. What particularly strikes us in his letters is his capacity for breathing life into the pettiest detail—which, of course, sprang directly from his humanism. Nothing was trivial to him. No wonder that Tagore paid a glowing tribute to Dr Chatterji as a letter-writer : “The title of *lipi-vāchaspati* or *lipi-sārvabhōma* or *lipi-chakravarti* should be conferred on Suniti.”

As a teacher, Dr Chatterji seldom confined himself to the bare text, but enlivened his lectures with anecdotes and with observations on this and that and the other, and leavened even the most abstruse matter with wit and humour, inspiring his students with the same lust for knowledge, the same avidity for experience, the same zest for life that had been his. A marked feature of his character was his encouragement of young learners and researchers in any branch of study.

As an examiner, Professor Chatterji was never niggardly in awarding marks ; indeed, he was a shining illustration of the saying—so widely current among students—that a teacher who himself secured very high marks seldom undervalues a really good answer-script when he becomes an examiner.

His prodigious memory, which became the envy of many, remained unimpaired at eighty-seven. It was an unforgettable experience to listen to him reciting from Homer or the Koran in the original—long after he had passed the biblical “three-score years and ten.”

He had an acute power of observation. Nothing escaped his keen eyes or his ears that were ever alert. In fact, I have always felt that his real and ultimate subject was neither linguistics nor art, but humanity. It is quite in the fitness of things that among his favourite lines were the well-known ones of Terence : “*homo sum : humani nihil a me alienum puto.*” (“I am a man ; nothing that concerns man do I consider alien, i.e., a matter of insignificance, to me”) The words of Terence might well have come from his own lips. Dr Chatterji was a *humanist* to the core—a humanist not merely in the sense current in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but in the broadest sense of the term.



## III

Among the languages and dialects mastered by Professor Chatterji were Greek, Latin, Classical Sanskrit, Vedic Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Hindi, Arabic, Old Persian, Zend, Gothic, Old and Middle English, Old Irish, Pushtu, not to speak of an equally large number of languages and dialects of which he had working knowledge. Unlike another polyglot, Harinath De, Professor Chatterji had the unique distinction of not only mastering so many languages, but probing into their origin and early history and later development as well. Moreover, he felt, and sought to establish, a certain unity in languages in the midst of diversity.

Dr Chatterji had travelled so extensively all over the world that what to a student of, say, Indo-European linguistics are generally mere names of language-branches or races became for him live realities. To him travel was literally a part of education.

His minute and careful study of the cultural affinities among widely different nations is not less remarkable than his linguistic researches. Dr Chatterji believed in the integration of different races through culture.

## IV

A complete bibliography of Professor Chatterji's writings in English, Bengali, Hindi and other languages—is yet to be made. To his major works (numbering nearly seventy) and his articles, reviews and prefaces (well over a thousand) must be added the texts and documents he edited in collaboration with others and, last but not least, some three hundred delightful "ślōkas" composed by him in various metres in Sanskrit.

The *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* (with a foreword by Grierson)—published in two volumes by the University of Calcutta in 1926 (when its author was only thirty-six) and later in three volumes by George Allen and Unwin, London, 1970-72, and recently in an American edition—is a monumental achievement and the initials O.D.B.L. have become as familiar to-day as C.H.E.L. or O.E.D.

Until recently, *Samskriti Śilpa Itihās* was the professor's last published work. The unfinished *Jeevan-kathā*, which appeared recently in *Sāradya Yugantar* (1977), is a posthumous publication.

Dr Chatterji's writings reveal not only a versatile mind, but a rare gift of style that helped him at once to instruct and to delight. Languages

and linguistic problems were never his sole concern ; he wrote, too, on racial and cultural intermixture, national integration, Indianism and the Indian synthesis, cosmopolitanism, the history and civilisation of India, medieval and modern Indian literature, Islamic mysticism, Indian music, and world literature. Tansen and Tulsidas, Jayadeva and Tagore, painting and sculpture, the stage and the museum, *Purāna* and *Jātaka* engaged his attention as much as the scientific and technical terms in modern Indian languages, the alphabet—Devanāgarī, Urdu and Roman, Iranianism, dress in India, Hinduism, Armenian Hero-Legends, and the African personality. There are scholarly treatises as well as primers, research papers as well as *belles-lettres*. If some of his writings are best appreciated by the thinker and the specialist, there are works—particularly among those written in the vernacular—that appeal immensely to the layman and the common reader.

## V

No talk on Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji is complete without a word or two about Tagore's influence on him. Called 'Bhāshāchārya' by the poet (in his Dedication to *Bānglā Bhāṣā Parichay*) and honoured with the title 'Desikōttama' by the Visvabhārati University, the professor was closely associated with Rabindranath and his Santiniketan. It was in company with the poet that he visited Malay, Sumatra, Java, Bali and Siam, a year after the publication of the O.D.B.L. The fruit of his travels was *Dwīpamoy Bhārat*, later published with the changed title *Rabindra-samgamé Dwīpamoy Bhārat O Siamdesh*. Apart from his talk on the poet's ideas and ideals in the South East Asian tour, and the essays here and there on various aspects of Tagore, later collected in *Manīshī-smarané*, we have, among Dr Chatterji's writings, *Rabindranath Tagore* (3 lectures, 1963) and *World Literature and Tagore* (1971), and his monograph, yet to be published, on Rabindranath's 'Jeevan Devatā.'

Tagore set a high value on Professor Chatterji's genius and it is delightful to find Amit Ray, the unconventional hero of *Śeṣer Kavītā*, reading Professor Chatterji's "Bhāshātatwa" in a trip to Shillong.

Dr Chatterji was not only proud of Tagore's affection for him, but was deeply devoted to the poet, some of whose lines—in the poet's own handwriting—decorated the walls of his bedroom. The lines, which baffle translation, are :

“nitya tōmāy citta bhariyā smaran kari,  
vishwaviheen vijané basiyā varan kari.  
Tumi āchhō mōr jeevan maran haran kari”

Could any other words so appropriately convey Professor Chatterji's deep love and respect for the poet? For it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that his relation to Tagore was not far removed from the poet's relation to his 'Jeevan-Devatā'. It is quite in the fitness of things that the professor wished *Rabindra-samgeet* to be sung at his 'srādh' ritulas instead of the traditional *Kirtan*.

## VI

In the last phase of his life Professor Chatterji was unfortunately drawn into a controversy about his alleged views on the origin of the *Rāmāyana*. It is a pity that his researches into this Indian epic which engaged him till the day of his death could not be completed. Among other works which he intended to write, or could not finish (or publish), are an Autobiography, Greek Art, the Krishna Legend and a monograph on Rabindranath's *Jeevan Devatā*. His mind retained its vigour and freshness, his ceaseless spirit of inquiry continued unabated even at eighty-seven. Optimistic by temperament, he hoped to complete the things he had planned. But I have a feeling that—deep down in his heart—there was an apprehension that he would not perhaps be able to complete them all. (An astrologer had predicted his death at eighty-seven). “O how much still remains to be done,” the professor once blurted out in his eighty-seventh year, “how much yet to be read.” A lover of the Bible, Dr Chatterji, it seems to me, must have recalled from time to time the Biblical utterance: “Let us work the work of him while it is day, for night cometh when no man can work.”

On the twenty-ninth of May, 1977, at about 4 P. M. our National Professor in Humanities passed away after some three hours' illness.

I cannot bring myself to believe that my beloved teacher, Bhāshā-chārya Suniti Kumar Chatterji is no more. The very thought makes me feel a lump at the throat, Death, however, has not been able to snatch him away from our midst. S. K. C. has found his way into our hearts and there he abides.

## THE HIUNG-NU WORD FOR 'SKY'

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H. W. BAILEY

THE Hiung-nu are reported in Chinese Annals from the end of the 3rd century B.C. Various words are cited of their language and the word for 'sky' is given as *t'ang-liei*, modern pronunciation *tɕ'əŋ-li* that is for a foreign *čang-ri* (older spellings are listed Asia Major 9.241). This word is known in the much later Turkish (700 years later) as *tängri* for both 'sky' and 'god'. In Uigur Turkish it is written *tnkry* for *tängri* without the sign for *-a-* in archaic spelling. From Turkish it came to Mongol where the sign for *-a-* and for *-n-* is different only by a dot, so that *t'kry* was read as *tegri*.

The Hiung-nu language in the past was claimed to be Turkish. Hence scholars such as G. Ramstedt, L. Bazin and A. von Gabain offered three (different) Turkish readings of the Hiung-nu verse preserved in Chinese script with a Chinese gloss. These attempts were dismissed by F. Pulleyblank<sup>1</sup>. He had decided to trace the Hiung-nu language as an older form of the Ket and Kot languages of the Siberian Ienissei region.<sup>2</sup> Though he cited the syllables of the Hiung-nu verse he did not provide a Ket reading.

However it seems clear that at least some of the Hiung-nu words are a form of Eastern Iranian. This is clear with Hiung-nu *so-t'o* 'boot', older *sakdak*, familiar in the New Persian *saxt-* of *saxtiyān* 'prepared leather' and earlier Parthian *saxtak* epithet of *mōčak* 'footwear' with the addition 'of the nobles', hence a special type of high-class leather boot. The Ket word *sāgdī* 'boot' is from this Iranian word.<sup>3</sup>

Other words quoted as Hiung-nu words can also be traced plausibly to Iranian. Here belongs Hiung-nu *čang-rai*, later Turkish *tängri*. The basic Iranian is *\*čanxaraka-* 'wheel, circle, sky'. This is a nasalized form of *čaxra-* 'wheel', as in Avestan and later *čaxr*, *čarx* 'wheel, sky'. The nasalization is like that in Buddhist Sogdian *wnyr* *wanxar* 'voice', Christian Sogdian *wxr* *\*waxr* from *vak-* 'to speak'. The suffix *-aka-* in later Iranian passed through *-aga-* to *-aya-* and to *ai-*, *-ē*, *-i*, as in the Ket word *sāgdī* 'boot' just cited. The replacement of initial *č-* by *t-* is found

also within Iranian as *čathru-* 'fourth part', later *tasu-*, New Persian *tasūj*. Similarly the word for 'iron' is in Buddhist Sanskrit *cimara-*, frequent in India as in Khowar *čumur*, and Waigali *čümār*.<sup>4</sup> From this came Turkish *timür*, *tämür*. Similarly the place name Sogdian *čāč*, adjective *čāčānai* has been preserved in the name *Tāš* of Tashkent.

The recognition that Hiung-nu contains words of Iranian origin confirms the connexion of this name Hiung-nu (earlier *hiwong-nuo*, *-nou* and *-nah*) with the ancient Avestan name *Hyaona-* of the time of Vištāspa and Zoroaster, which survived later in the tradition as *Hyon*. It would seem that at an early period the *Hyaona-* had migrated eastwards. The Chinese histories then report that they were driven back by peoples from further east. At about 200 A.D. the Sogdians called them *hun*, the Khotan Saka *huna*, and in India they are *hūna-*. In the west the Persian called them *hyōn*, and the Greek has the two name *ounnoi* and *khiōnital*.<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese spelling *hiung-nu* (for which signs with derogatory meanings were chosen) records a dissyllable in which the *-nu* was earlier *-nah*. Hence the form may transcribe the Iranian plural *Hyaunāh*.

Elsewhere the other Hiung-nu words cited in the article of Asia Major 9, 1962 will be examined. A short paper on some of these words has already been sent to the volume to be dedicated to Professor Heinz Mode in 1978. For the name *Hyaona-* as cognate with Vedic *syoná-*, there is an article in Indo-Celtica, memorial volume to A. Sommerfelt 1972.

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1. Asia Major 9, 1962, 264.
2. Ibid. 242 ff.
3. Cited with my note in Asia Major 9, 243-4.
4. R. L. Turner, Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan, p. 828.
5. In Asiatica, the Fr. Weller Festschrift 1954, the article Harahūpa has many other details.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF 9 IN BABYLONIAN AND HITTITE LITERATURE

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O. R. GURNEY

IN the early years of this century W. H. Roscher compiled a massive monograph on the symbolic significance of the numbers 7 and 9 in the civilisations of Greece and Rome, including incidentally some references to a similar use of these numbers in the literature of India, Persia, Egypt, China, Mexico and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> For ancient Babylonia he was able to adduce a few references supplied to him by H. Zimmern,<sup>2</sup> but at that time the archives of the Hittite kings still lay beneath the soil at Boğazköy.

The special significance of the number 7 to the Babylonians was fully expounded by J. Hehn in 1907.<sup>3</sup> The number 9, however, seems to have played little part in this civilisation as compared either with the prominence of the heptad or with the extensive evidence for the ennead in Greece, Rome, Egypt or India. F. X. Kugler drew attention<sup>4</sup> to the year name for the 45th year of Šulgi—"Year when Simurru and Lulubum were destroyed for the 9th time"—pointing out that only three other destructions are attested and suggesting that the number 9 here has the sense of completeness or finality (a view since accepted by A. Ungnad and E. Weidner<sup>5</sup>). But in support of this usage he was unable to find anything more impressive than a few incantations in the series *Maqlû* consisting of 9 short imprecations. The 9 Anunnaki of the commentary K. 2056+2057 appear nowhere else and the entry is now regarded as some sort of scribal error.<sup>6</sup> The two groups of 9 deities to whom incense burners are set out in the mouth-washing ritual *BBR* 31-37<sup>7</sup> have no coherence and seem to be adventitious; the first consists of the two great triads, Anu, Emlil, Ea, Šin, Shamash, Adad, with the addition of Marduk, Gula and Ninsianna, the second of the Mother-goddess, the High Priest of Enlil, the goddess of incantations and five of the craftsman gods, together with the god whose statue is the object of the ceremony. The number 9 here seems to have no more significance than, for instance, the 4 altars set up in the *namburbi* ritual *Orientalia* 39 (1970), 118, 20.

More recently W. von Soden has pointed out that in the Atra-hasis epic "ninefold" yield is taken to symbolise an abundant harvest and a 9-day celebration is ordained in honour of the Goddess of Birth.<sup>8</sup> In this context the figure may well have special reference to the 9 months of gestation, as von Soden suggests.

It is then all the more striking that the Hittite archives have brought to light a fair number of examples of enneads of various kinds. In the myth "Kingship in heaven" the gods reign in turn for periods of 9 years<sup>9</sup>. 9 seas and 9 rivers are mentioned in contexts which suggest that they may be located in the Underworld.<sup>10</sup> Rituals of various kinds contain references to 9 sacrificial animals, 9 loaves, 9 libations, 9 stews, 9 *kukub* vessels, 9 paths, 9 pits, 9 springs, 9 pegs, 9 fires, 9 *eian* trees, 9 pieces of gravel, 9 combs, 9 torches, 9 draughts from a spring, a ladder with 9 rungs. According to V. Haas, the parts of the body were also sometimes counted as 9; however, the single passage which he quotes for this has an uncertain reading<sup>11</sup> and the normal number is unquestionably 12.

It is difficult to detect a common denominator in all the texts where these figures occur. It is true that in many instances there is some connexion with the Underworld, as pointed out by V. Haas.<sup>12</sup> *IBoT* II 128, in which Ishtar is enjoined to draw water 9 times from a spring and to use only the 9th draught, is part of the ritual for evoking the Anunnaki or Primeval Gods from the Under-world.<sup>13</sup> The 9 paths and 9 pits in *KUB* XV 31 are undoubtedly intended to lure the MAH and Gulses deities up from the Underworld to which they may have departed.<sup>14</sup> In the funerary ritual at several points 9 animals are sacrificed to the Sun-Goddess of the Underworld and the soul of the dead man.<sup>15</sup> In the Karahna ritual *CTH* 681 and the ritual *CTH* 447 the Sun-Goddess of the Underworld receives 9 libations, 9 sheep and 9 loaves.<sup>16</sup> The Luwian ritual *KUB* XXXV 88, which mentions 9 combs, is concerned with the god Antaliya, who apparently belongs to the Underworld.<sup>17</sup> The ritual of Zarpiya, *CTH* 757, is directed against Santas and the Innarawantes gods who, in view of their bloodstained garments etc. and the fact that they have caused a pestilence, may be thought to be chthonic deities.<sup>18</sup> The 9 pegs in *KBo* XVII, 1, *KUB* XII 49 and *VBoT* 111 are probably for the purpose of pegging down the exorcised evil in the Underworld, as in the passage *ZA* 54, 129 from *CTH* 446.<sup>19</sup>

However, there are many exceptions. In *KUB* XV 31 the Underworld is only one of the seven cosmic locations to which the deities may

have departed. Why are there 9 fires, 9 springs, 9 rivers, probably 9 mountains (in a lacuna)? These are unlikely to be all connected with the Underworld, since the seventh location is Heaven. The view that MAH and Gulses deities are themselves chthonic does not seem to be so well substantiated as is commonly supposed.<sup>20</sup> In this ritual, at any rate, their proper place is evidently in the home of the patient on whose behalf the ritual is being conducted.<sup>21</sup> They are his personal genii. KUB VII 60, which is similar to XV 31 in making use of 9 paths, is a ritual for attracting the gods of an enemy city, for whom there is no reason to suspect an Underworld connexion.<sup>22</sup> IBoT III 148, which has a reference to 9 stews (UTÚL) and 9 loaves, is a reverse evocation to move the national gods, Teshub, Hebat, Sharruma *et al.* out of their temples.<sup>23</sup> VBoT 24, which has 9 pieces of gravel and 9 foods (*etri*), is an evocation of the genius of the shield (<sup>a</sup>KAL *kuršas*).<sup>24</sup> The numerous references to 9 torches cited by Otten in *StBoT*. 15 p. 7 are not in chthonic rituals. Another exception is the festival ritual edited by Otten in *StBoT* 13, in which a long list of deities is divided into 9 groups, each of which receives a sacrifice of an animal.<sup>25</sup> These are the normal gods and goddesses of the Hittite pantheon. The case is similar to that of the two groups of 9 deities occurring in the Akkadian mouth-washing ritual, as mentioned above.

Thus the rationale of the number 9 remains obscure. The 9 years in the myth "Kingship in heaven" may perhaps be connected with the 9 months of gestation, as in the Atrahasis Epic. For the rest, we appear to have a group with special potency probably based merely on the square of 3, as suggested long ago by Kugler. At least the Hittite archives have added a considerable body of evidence for such a notion to that assembled by Roscher.

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2. ASGW XXIV Nr. 1, 82 n. 169.
3. *Siebenzahl und Sabbat bei den Babyloniern und im Alten Testament* (Leipziger Semitische Studien II, 5).



4. *Hilprecht Anniversary Volume* (1909), 303-9 ; *Sternkunde und Sterndienst in Babel II* (1909-10), 192-7.
- 5A. Ungnad in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* II, 142 ; E. Weidner in *Archiv für Orientforschung* XV (1945-51), 75.
6. S. Langdon in *Revue d' Assyriologie* 28 (1931), 117 ; B. Kienast in *Studies in Honour of B. Landsberger* (Assyriological Studies 16, Chicago, 1965), 144.
7. H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Babylonischen Religion* (Leipzig, 1901), 140, 142.
8. *Actes de la XVII<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Bruxelles, 30 juin-4 juillet 1969*, 145 f.
9. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. J. B. Pritchard (3rd ed., Princeton 1969), 120 ff.
10. *KUB XXXVI* 89 rev. 4-6, 21-22, ed. V. Haas, *Der Kult von Nerik* (Studia Pohl 4, Rome 1970), 150, 152 (cf. 103). The text does not say explicitly that the 9 rivers and seas to which the god has descended are in the Underworld ; but if the text is consistent they must certainly be there, since in obv. 12 he has gone down into a pit and in obv. 19-20 he is evoked from the Underworld. However, in *KUB XV* 31 the 9 rivers and the sea do not seem to be in the Underworld (see below).
11. *KUB XXXV* 148 iii 15 (cited by Haas, *Der Kult von Nerik*, 104 n.1), where the copyist, H. Otten, seems to have thought that a reading 12 was possible.
12. *Der Kult von Nerik*, 103-4 ; *Orientalia* 45 (1976), 199 ff.
13. H. Otten, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 54 (1961), 157.
14. Edited by V. Haas and G. Wilhelm, *Hurritische und luwische Riten aus Kizzuwatna* (Neukirchen, 1974), in particular obv. ii 156 (pp. 155-61).
15. H. Otten, *Hethitische Totenrituale* (Berlin, 1958), 40, 68, 98 ; also with the addition of the Sun-god of heaven, the grandparents and the "Good Day", pp. 25 and 33.
16. *KUB XXVII* 70 iii 11 (*apud* A. M. Dinçol and M. Darga, *Anatolica* III, 1969-70, 108, 44) ; *KBo.* XI 10 iii 12, 22 (=72 iii 10).
17. L. Rost in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* I (1953), 371. However, the evidence for this god is hardly sufficient to determine his character.
18. Cf. E. Laroche in *Les syncrétismes dans les religions grecque et romaine* (Colloque de Strasbourg, 1973), 110.
19. Quoted Gurney, *Schweich Lectures 1976*, 29. However, pegs are of course used for many purposes in these rituals (Haas and Wilhelm, *op. cit.* [n. 14] 48 n. 2).
20. This view is based primarily on their frequent connexion with the *wappu* (river bank) and their grouping in lists of divinities with <sup>d</sup>U. GUR ; see especially A. Goetze, *The Hittite Ritual of Tunnawi* (New Haven, 1938), 55, and E. Laroche in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* II (1948), 125. But the *wappu* functions not only as a passage leading to the Underworld, but also as a place of purification ; and the god U. GUR is not Nergal, the ruler of the Underworld, as in Akkadian, but either Sulinkatti or another god (Otten, *Zur grammatikalischen und lexikalischen Bestimmung des Luwischen*, 1953, 39-40). That the

MAH and Gulsas were deities of the house, or of the sacrificer, was already observed by Goetze (op cit. 56). Otten and Siegelova, in *Archiv für Orientforschung* XXIII (1970) 32-8, have shown that they were goddesses of individual destiny, presiding at birth, and in mythology creatresses of man.

21. Obv. i. 50-55.
22. This text is edited by Haas and Wilhelm, op. cit. (n. 14), 234 ff.
23. Ibid. 211 ff.
24. E. Sturtevant and G. Bechtel, *A Hittite Chrestomathy* (1935), 112, 3.4 ff.
25. *Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten*, Heft 13 (1971), 29 ff. Cf. n. 20.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

ASGW	<i>Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften.</i>
CTH	<i>E. Laroche, Catalogue des textes hittites.</i> Paris, 1971.
KBo	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi.</i> Leipzig/Berlin, 1916-.
KUB	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi,</i> Berlin, 1921-.
STBoT	<i>Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten.</i> Wiesbaden.

## GERMANIC \*lu<sup>s</sup>tu-

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VITTORE PISANI

THE most common term for 'air' in the Germanic languages is \*lu<sup>s</sup>tu- : Goth. *luftus*, Germ. *Luft* f. (but masculine in Upper German), OE *lyft*, OS *luft*, Dutch *luht*.

The etymology of this word is unknown ("Etymologie dunkel" : Kluge-Mitzka, "Et. unbekannt" : Feist) : in Feist's *Etym. Wb. d. got. Sprache*<sup>3</sup> we find, however, a hint at a more precise meaning : «α'η'ρ Luft (eig. "obere Luftschicht" ?)» . In this case, the value of *luftus* would be analogous to that of Gk. α'θ'η'ρ which means 'the upper stratus of the atmosphere', as we may infer, above all, from Homer, e.g. *Il.* 14, 288. Now, since α'θ'η'ρ is undoubtedly a formation from α'θ'ω (may be in accordance with α'η'ρ), in opposition to α'η'ρ 'the lower atmosphere' that belongs somehow to α'η'μτ or, at least, was understood by the Greeks as pertaining to α'η'μτ (from the IE root \*uē- found in Skr. *vā-ta-s*, Lat. *ventus*, etc.), thus I suppose *luftus* to contain the same root appearing in Germ. *Licht*, Goth. *liuhaþ*, etc. and, consequently, going back to an older form \*luk-tu- < \*leuk- (for which see Pokorny, *IEW* p. 687). If so, then, there was in the German—as well as in the Greek—world, a contrast between 'the lower and the upper atmosphere', of which the first one is connected with 'the wind' (α'η'ρ : α'η'μτ = Goth. *wind* : *wojan* 'wehen'), while the second was taken as 'the brightness of the light' (α'θ'η'ρ : α'θ'ω = *luftus* : *liuhaþ*).

The reconstructed \*luhtu- is a -tu- abstract with the zero-grade ; such abstracts can be both masculine and feminine : more exactly, the feminine gender appears only in Germanic and Aryan (cfr. Brugmann, *Grundriss* II, 1, p. 440). Moreover, *Luft* is, in German, also masculine, as in Old and Middle High German, and still today we find it so in the Upper German dialects, whereas *die Luft* in Modern literary German has spread from Luther on, who used only the feminine.

From the phonetic point of view, all this presupposes that a pre-Germanic \*kt gave ft besides ht. Now, we find a form with ht in Low German, i.e. *lucht*, already in the Middle Ages ; but here we can suspect

this to be due to the passage *ft* > *ht*, which took place precisely in Old Saxon and Low and Middle Franconian. It is therefore necessary to think that this passage *ft* > *ht* is very old, so as to have given rise to a reaction in isolated words, and extended far beyond its original frontiers: for example I have shown elsewhere (*Storia della lingua latina* I, p. 39) that the passage *al* > *au* before consonants coming from France, established itself in Piedmont and Liguria, and from here spread partially over North and West Tuscany, so that from Lat. *cal(i)du* *falsus altus* we find Piedm. *caud faus aut* and so on; in Tuscany (where in Lucca and its surroundings also *caudo fauso auto* are still living) such a phenomenon was rejected by the preserving tendency thanks to which we find also nowadays *caldo falso alto*. But this restoration seized some older *au*-diphthongs too, and, subsequently, *calma* 'sun-heat' (from Gk. *καύμα*) gave rise to *calma* 'good weather', and *sauma* 'pack-saddle' (already in Isidor, *Orig.* XX 16, 5, from Gk. *σαύμα*) appears as *salma* (beside *soma*); and this sporadic passage *au* > *al* is to be found elsewhere in Northern Italy up to the Adriatic coast (for some instances of which see Rohlfs, *Gramm. stor. della lingua italiana* § 42).

# THE STUDY OF WULFILA'S ALPHABET

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ERNST A. EBBINGHAUS

It is a curious fact that for over a century and a half the study of Wulfila's alphabet has been limited to only one particular question, viz. the question of its origin. Several generations of scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries have devoted an enormous amount of energy to the solution of that one problem without ever paying attention to any of the numerous other questions which Wulfila's alphabet presents to the palaeographer and to the student of writing.

The earlier students of the Gothic language did not see any great problem in the question of the origin of Wulfila's alphabet. It appeared quite clear to them that Wulfila's letters derived from the Greek alphabet. Quite confidently Lye quoted Leibnitius' somewhat apodictic remark : *Alphabetum Ulphilanum manifeste ex Graeco formatum est.*<sup>1</sup> Had subsequent generations of scholars taken this idea as a hypothesis, investigated it a little closer, and tried to put it on a more scientific basis, had they attempted to discover exactly how the one alphabet could be derived from the other, we should have been spared a not insignificant number of untenable linguistic theories as e.g. the notion of the phonetic double value of the Gothic digraphs *ai* and *au*.

However, in the 19th and the earlier 20th centuries one went to work on quite different assumptions. The idea that Wulfila had derived his alphabet from only one model alphabet was generally given up in favour of what I have called the mixture-theory. It became more or less the *communis opinio* that Wulfila used two or three different alphabetic systems to form his own alphabet: the Greek and Latin alphabets and the *Futhark*, the Germanic runes. Soon one began to differ widely regarding the combination of the model alphabets—Greek and Latin, Greek and runes, Latin and runes, Greek, Latin and runes—and also regarding the share each of the models was supposed to have contributed to Wulfila's system. Only Zacher stayed with the idea of one model alphabet, and in an admirable *tour de force* he attempted to show that Wulfila's alphabet was derived exclusively from the runes.<sup>2</sup>

It might be interesting to investigate some day the question why the mixture-theory has been kept alive for so long a time in ever new

variations. It is after all not the most common phenomenon that a new alphabet is composed of parts of two or three older alphabetic systems. For the early days of Gothic studies the idea of an admixture of the Latin alphabet is understandable. Then Wulfila's alphabet was known only in the so-called Type II, i.e. the script of cod. arg. and cod. Carol. Once the so-called Type I alphabet came to light with the discovery of the Milanese codices the error should have been rectified. However, while the new type of alphabet was recognized as such, the true chronological relation between it and the so-called Type II was not recognized, because one failed to study the difference between the two types in regard to their respective systems of *nasa!* suspension. It is the use of the *n*-suspension alone that proves the so-called Type I to be older than Type II.

Later when the true chronological relation between the two types had become general knowledge the so-called Type II alphabet retained in grammars and handbooks a rather predominant position; it is usually the only form of Wulfila's alphabet of which a picture is given. The so-called Type I ordinarily receives no more than a brief mention, and the question of other types is never even raised.

While the idea of a Latin admixture is, under these circumstances, understandable, if not excusable, I can find no rational explanation for the idea that the runes were also involved in Wulfila's work. But then, while for the student of writing the Germanic runes are no more and no less than an epigraphic script, for many students of Germanic languages they seem to be symbols imbued with peculiar powers which silence reason. One need only read the argument with which Krause tried to force the *o*-rune into Wulfila's alphabet.<sup>3</sup>

What is strangely missing in all these attempts to make the mixture-theory work is a consistent method. The mere assumption that Wulfila used two or three alphabetic systems is an insufficient basis; one must at least prove that Wulfila knew these alphabets. That, however, was never done. Instead one has quoted time and again the famous statement by Auxentius that Wulfila preached in three languages, Greek, Latin, and Gothic, and that he left behind after his death writings in these three languages.<sup>4</sup> That, however, does not mean that Wulfila *read* and *wrote* in these three languages, and I have shown elsewhere that at the time he devised his alphabet Wulfila did not know the Latin alphabet or the *Futhark*.<sup>5</sup> Aside from the failure to establish a solid basis for the mixture-theory by showing at least that Wulfila knew the assumed model alphabets one has also consistently avoided to subject Wulfila's alphabet and his

orthographic system to a rigorous analysis. Such an analysis would have revealed the principles that guided Wulfila in his work, and once these principles were known the idea that he had picked more or less at random individual letters from two or three alphabetic systems could not have survived.

The mixture-theory, however, has survived into our days and even seems to have become something like a *credo*. When in 1950—200 years after Lye—Bouüaert reverted to the idea that Wulfila's alphabet was derived from only one model, viz. the Greek alphabet, he was either ignored or rejected out of hand.<sup>6</sup> Yet even Bouüaert's work was somewhat affected by the mixture-theory inasmuch as he admits an indirect influence of the runes upon Wulfila's alphabet. Certain letters were changed, he thinks, in order to keep them distinct from the runes. The main weakness of Bouüaert's paper lies in the following. First, he relies as everyone before him purely on the comparison of the shapes of the individual letters. Second, he works only with the so-called Type I and Type II alphabets. Third, he does not give an analysis of Wulfila's alphabet as a phonetic system. Thus his work remains somewhat unconvincing though it certainly deserves more attention and Krause's harsh rejection was utterly unjustified.<sup>7</sup>

Some years ago I completed my own study of the question, and in a paper currently in the press I have retraced the steps Wulfila took in devising his alphabet.<sup>8</sup> I have shown there that Wulfila took the twenty-seven letters of the Greek alphabet (including the 'silent' ones) as his model; that he discarded those phonetic values of his model alphabet which he could not use giving new phonetic values to such 'vacated' letters; and that he developed his system of one-letter and two-letter symbols for the vowels out of the possibilities Greek spelling practice of the 4th century offered. Thus the question of the origin of Wulfila's alphabet has finally been answered though the answer is neither surprising nor new: *manifeste ex Graeco formatum est*.

The question of its origin, however, is only one of many equally interesting and equally important questions Wulfila's alphabet has to offer, and it seems to me that after one has spent a century and a half on only one problem the time has come to consider some of the others. Of these many are so obvious that it is puzzling to see that they were never attacked at all. Others emerge only after prolonged and intensive study of the material. In the following I shall try to define some of these problems as I see them. In doing so I shall have to draw in part on

preliminary results of investigations that are still in progress, and in part on material currently in the press.

In the course of my investigation of the Gothic remnants of cod. Vindob. 795 I was able to identify a further type of Wulfila's alphabet. Two questions resulted from this. The first of these is a terminological question, the second one is the question of the relationship between this 'new' type of Wulfila's alphabet and the two types traditionally recognized.

Terminological questions can be of considerable importance. In the case of Wulfila's alphabet one has got used to calling the older of the two traditionally recognized types Type I and the younger one Type II. This terminology as I have pointed out long ago can only lead to confusion. If any type of Wulfila's alphabet should be found that is demonstrably older than Type I, if any type were identified that does not directly derive from Type II, if any type could be shown to stand historically between Type I and Type II: what should it be called? Already at their inception the terms were wrong, because it is generally recognized that Type I does not represent Wulfila's own letters, hence at least one older type did exist, and that even if unknown must receive a name: surely one will not try to call it Type\*I? Therefore a terminological reform is urgently needed; the terms Type I and Type II should be given up quickly at a time when the study of Wulfila's alphabet has not yet progressed so far as to make any terminological changes impossible. I propose to use the shape of the *s* as a single criterion to obtain a first rough classification. All forms of Wulfila's alphabet whose *s* has the  $\Sigma$ -shape should be called  $\Sigma$ -type, and all those whose *s* has the form of the Roman uncial should be called S-Type. For further classification, subtypes as it were, other criteria must be found. For the individual execution of types or subtypes the word *hand* should be used as has always been done in the case of the cod. arg.

The second question that resulted from the identification of the 'new' type of alphabet, that of its relation to other types was attacked by M. Wentzler and myself." We were able to show that this type while belonging to the  $\Sigma$ -Type cannot derive from the  $\Sigma$ -Type alphabets known from the Milanese codices, but originated from a cursive  $\Sigma$ -Type alphabet through the process of reshaping the cursive in to a literary or 'book-' hand.

Thus the question of a Wulfilan cursive has become acute. So far we know only one document in which individual characters are written



cursively and that is the Naples deed. That document seems to mix cursive and non-cursive letters but in a somewhat irregular fashion. It might therefore be rash to term its script a semi-cursive without further and closer analysis. It is in this connection that one feels most keenly the loss of the Arezzo deed. Doni's facsimile appears to reveal a script very similar to that of Naples, but the facsimile cannot replace the original, and going through the facsimile letter by letter one is haunted by doubts. A complete assessment of the alphabet of Naples is still a matter of the future. At present I am inclined to believe that indeed Naples presents us with a semi-cursive in its own right, but I am far from certain.

Further work is also needed regarding the Wulfilan cursive. In certain respects the question of the Wulfilan cursive appears to be easier to answer than the question of the true status of the alphabet of Naples and I hope to be able to present my conclusions in the near future. That much, however, I can already say: the Wulfilan cursive was of fundamental importance for the entire development of Wulfila's alphabet.

Aside from these few questions I just mentioned there are, of course, numerous others. Wulfila's alphabet must have had a life span of about 450, perhaps even 500 years. *Sub specie aeternitatis* that is, of course, not much. In the life history of a script, however, 500 years are an enormously long time. One need only think of what happened to the Roman cursive in the various European countries between 700 and 1200. Wulfila's alphabet must be studied historically, and, since it did not live in isolation, it must be studied in conjunction with other alphabets, i.e. the Roman and Greek ones. It must further be studied in conjunction with the movements of the Goths in Europe. We have the two Z-Type alphabets, that known from the Milanese codices and that which we have tentatively called 'Viennese'; we have further the S-Type. All of them 'book-' hands. Why and where did they originate?

We need most urgently painstaking analyses of the various hands of the palimpsests in Milan and Turin, texts as well as margins. The individual execution of the various alphabets not only poses new questions (which in turn demand answers), but may also help in answering certain questions. I am thinking in particular of the sloping execution of the Z-Type alphabet in cod. Ambros. Sign. 45 parte superiore. That hand shows a startling affinity to certain executions of the 'sloping' Greek hands of the 5th century.

The study of Wulfila's alphabet is yet in its infancy. I for one should like to see it grow. Admittedly the material with which we have to work is limited, and most of it lies before us in palimpsests which are hard to read. But they are not impossible to read and modern palimpsest photography has been a most helpful invention for the palaeographer. One should be able in the end to present at least an outline of the history of Wulfila's alphabet and a complete analysis of all the types or forms in which it is preserved.

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## CLASS IDIOM IN EARLY INDO-EUROPEAN

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JAAN PUHVEL

THE idiomatic elements of a living language are among its most elusive ingredients, being difficult of access by the ordinary devices of a systematizing grammar.<sup>1</sup> The comparativistic student of a proto-language is especially helpless in the face of idioms, since the latter are by definition one step removed from the level which the linguist can hope to capture in his formulae. Idioms embody the living, vivid, creative component of speech, one that is rarely reflected even by the traditional or written word, let alone reproduced as a reconstruct in the sterile test-tube of a grammarian.

Is there, then, any hope of recapturing some remote Indo-European lexical vividness, the type of semantic translocation that verges on slang or betokens humor? The nature of the earliest documents might seem inimical to such a possibility. Ritualistic or legal language does abound in formulaic lore, as when Vedic *śrad-dhā-* and Latin *crēdō* 'believe' are analyzable into 'place trust' (vel sim.),<sup>2</sup> or Avestan *yaož-dā-* (literally 'apply religious law' vel sim.) corresponds to Latin *iusta facere* 'perform due funeral rites'.<sup>3</sup> I once tried to show that Greek *ékthar* 'hatred' and Latin *instar* 'like (ness), accord, harmony' reflect a pair of Indo-European metaphoric antonyms *\*ek-stAr* and *\*en-stAr* semantically similar to German *abstand* and *einstand*.<sup>4</sup> Yet such data show at best that compound terms were capable of figurative meanings, something that would be probable a priori in any language presumed to have been alive.

However, if the formal style of the priestly and legalistic orbit was almost by definition devoid of the humorous, the whimsical, or the grotesque, by contrast the speech of the warrior and the herdsman-husbandman might have been more prone to lexical levity. In this vein Karl Hoffmann<sup>5</sup> has made a significant contribution by distinguishing elements of military slang in the Vedic usages of the verb *snih-*. Indo-European *\*sneygh-* generally has a meaning 'snow' (thus in Greek, Latin, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic), a sense which is not unknown in

Indo-Iranian either (Avestan *snaēža*-‘to snow,’ Pāli *siṇha*-‘snow’). But the Sanskrit verb *snih*- means ‘stick to, adhere to, be glued to, become attached to,’ and hence ‘love’; at the earlier end of this semantic chain one may discern in the noun *snéha*- (rather than ‘stickiness, attachment’) a less pleasant sense of ‘drool, drivel, slaver,’ not unrelated to *snīhān*- ‘mucus, phlegm’ or Avestan *snaēžana*- ‘slavering’ (referring to children, dogs, wolves). The common semantic denomination is ‘stick to,’ but with an already Indo-European nominal side-meaning *\*snigh<sup>w</sup>*- or *\*snoygh<sup>w</sup>*- ‘sticky stuff’=‘clinging snow,’ from which the verbal formations ‘to snow’ are secondary denominative offshoots describing how the ‘sticky condition’ comes about. In most branches of Indo-European ‘snow’ became the primary sense and the ‘sticky’ verbal meaning disappeared, while in Avestan it coexists with ‘snow’ and in Old Indic the basic verb has retained preeminence. Greek happens to be the only branch which has both suppressed the primary verbal meaning and developed ‘snow’ nouns from both *\*snigh<sup>w</sup>*- (acc. sg. *nīpha*) and *\*ghyem*- (*khion*).<sup>6</sup>

Now there are Vedic forms of *snih*-, such as the aorist *asnihad* (*Kāṭhaka Samhitā* 28.4) and the Rig-Vedic causative *snehāyat*, which Hoffmann has plausibly explained as examples of warrior jargon starting from a meaning ‘stick’. The aorist refers to a demonically despatched *dūkṣinā*, a gift-cow whom the gods repulsed so that *asnihad eṣā* ‘she got stuck,’ i.e. remained glued to the ground incapacitated, unlike her more spunky successors who respectively ‘got up her courage’ for counterattack (*nṛmṇam eṣāgāt*) or at least ‘ran away’ (*adrāsīd eṣā*). *RV* 9.97.54 *āsvāpayan nigūtaḥ snehāyac ca* ‘he put the defamers to sleep and made them stick’ is replete with such jargon: *svāpāyati* ‘put to sleep’ can of course be euphemistic for ‘kill’ (like the English equivalent describing canine euthanasia), or it may be poetic (as in the Latin etymon in Silius Italicus 10.152-153 *fundā...sopierat* ‘had laid low with a sling-stone’); but more probably it resembles English boxing slang, particularly in connection with *snehāyat*, thus something full of braggadocio like ‘he knocked them out cold and splattered them across the landscape’.

It is of course possible that Vedic *snih*- reflects a peculiarly Old Indic military idiolect. But there is no reason to think that the semantic proclivities which it manifests were any less typical of other ancient Indo-European groupings. In this context, Vedic *antār dhā*- and Latin *interficiō*<sup>7</sup> offer some significant mutual parallels pointing back jointly to an IE *\*enter dhē*-. The literal meaning of the latter reconstruct is ‘put/do in/

away,' and out of this gloss we can readily construct three English colloquial or slang expressions: 'do in'='kill,' 'do away with'='kill,' and 'put away'='consume, devour'. In Vedic there are both literal meanings (e.g. *RV* 6.44.23 *ayām sūrye adadhāj jyōtir antāḥ* 'this one put the light in the sun') and the notion of 'do away with,' ironically used of rubbing out death itself (*RV* 10.18.4 *śatām jīvantu śarādaḥ purūcīr antār mṛtyūm dadhatām pārvatena* 'may they live a hundred plentiful autumns, may they do in death with a mountain'); in the *Atharvaveda* (5.28.8) *prātyauhan mṛtyum...adardādhānā duritāni viśvā* 'they repulsed death, having done away with all ills'; in the *Maṭtrāyaṇī Samhitā* (1.2.1) *āntār ārātīr dadhe mahatā pārvatena* 'I have done in the demons with a great mountain'.

The corresponding Latin *interficiō* (standard rendering: 'kill') has a variety of archaic uses: *qui me interfecisti paene vita et lumine* 'you who almost put me out of life and light' (Plautus, *Truculentus* 518)<sup>8</sup> is comparable to the standard legalistic expression for 'banish,' *interdicere alicui aqua et igni* 'forbid one water and fire,' but is on a different stylistic level.<sup>9</sup> Parallel to the Vedic rubbing out by means of a mountain, *ego illam anum interfecero siti fameque atque algu* 'I shall do away with that hag with the help of thirst, hunger, and cold' (Plautus, *Mostellaria* 193).

Another Old Latin author, Lucilius, reflects a different aspect of \**enter dhē-*, that of 'putting away' food: *durum molle voras, fragmenta interficis panis* 'you gobble up hard and soft food, you put away bread-crumbs' (fragment 1175, ed. W. Krenkel [1970]); *piscium magnam atque altitium vim interfecisti* 'you have polished off a big heap of fish and fowl' (fragment 757-8). The meaning 'consume' in a figurative sense has taken off from there, e.g. *internecionem fore Meleagro ubi torrus esset interfectus flammeus* 'it would be death to Meleagros if the firebrand was consumed' (Accius fragment 451-2, ed. O. Ribbeck).

Perhaps one may glimpse in the various attestations of Latin *interdicō* and *interficiō*, and their Indo-Iranian cognates *antarā mru-* and *antār dhā-*, a trace of Indo-European social class idiom: *interdicere aqua et igni* and *antarā...haxmāng mruyē* imply religious and societal excommunication by verbal means and are thus a prerogative of the priestly class. If that *démarche* does not take care of a menace, the warrior is called on to \**enter dhē-* 'do in' the foe by feats of strength, to the mythical point of heaving mountains. Alternatively, the herder-cultivator, in control of the means of physical sustenance, can \**enter dhē*

'do in' the hostile elements by starving or freezing them, or conversely fortify himself and the rest of society by more conspicuous consumption (literally 'putting away') of the same sources of livelihood. The meanings of \**enter dhē-* thus neatly straddle the second and third estates, even as deities such as Mars, Thraētaona, or Thor overlap the warlike and agricultural functions. Someone like Thor alternately killing giants and gupling down oxen with mead illustrates the two aspects of \**enter dhē-*.

To underline the canonical nature of this tripartition we need but recall Cato's prayer to Mars<sup>10</sup> where three types of onslaughts (diseases, devastations, blights) are to be countered by verbal, warlike, and agricultural procedures respectively (*prohibessis, defendas, avcruncesque*), and compare it with the injunction of *Rigvidhāna* 1.2.3 : "A kṣatriya shall overcome misfortunes that have befallen him by the strength of his arms, a vaiśya and a śūdra by their wealth, the chief of the twice-born by muttered prayers and burnt-offerings."<sup>11</sup>

Thus the Indo-European priest-judge could \**ḱred dhē-* 'place trust', \**yews dhē-* apply religious law', or \**enter* + say 'remove by spoken word', whereas the warrior and herdsman-husbandman were in semantic charge of \**enter dhē-* in its various colloquial applications. The warrior was a menace : he could do you in, put you to sleep, or make you stick to the sod.

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2. Cf. e.g. Emile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris, 1969), 1.171-179.
3. Cf. the *denicales feriae*, rites which purified the survivors of the *nex* of the departed, corresponding to the Avestan decontamination procedures against the demoness of dead matter, Nasu (cognate with Latin *nec-*). The earliest attestation is in the *Leges Regiae* : *homo si fulmine occisus est, ei iusta nulla fieri oportet*. See e.g. Georges Dumézil, *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 134 (1948), 95-112.
4. *Glotta* 37 (1958), 288-292.
5. *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 18 (1965), 13-23.
6. Emile Benveniste, "Hiver" et "neige" en indo-européen, *Gedenkschrift Paul Kretschmer* (Wien, 1956), 1.31-39, distinguished Greek *khion* (cf. Sanskrit

*hima-*) as snow-substance from *n(e)iph-* as the atmospheric phenomenon of snowing, and assumed for *\*sneygh<sup>10</sup>*- a basic meaning 'stick together, coagulate' > 'snow' in a large part of the Indo-European speech area (therein agreeing with Jan Gonda, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 73 [1955], 228-230). The Greek distinction is not historically basic, the proto-sense of *\*gheym-* being 'winter (season), frost', which developed a specific side-meaning 'snow' only in a contiguous dialect area (Greek, Indo-Iranian, Armenian *jiwn* 'snow' besides *jmern* 'winter'). It does not look like Indo-European has perpetuated a primary verb 'to snow', nor, for that matter, a noun with a base-meaning 'snow'.

7. Recently studied by Claude Sandoz in *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris* 71.1 (1976), 207-219.
8. Cf. Gellius 12.7.2 *eadem mulier virum et filium eodem tempore venenis clam datis vita interfecerat* 'the same woman had put out of life her husband and son at the same time by secretly giving them poison'.
9. Cf. Avestan *antarə mru-* in *Yasna* 49.3 *antarə vispāng drəgvatō haxmāng mruyē* 'to all followers of the lie I forbid communion'.
10. *De agri cultura* 141.
11. Translated by Jan Gonda (Utrecht, 1951).

# **A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT RECONSTRUCTING INDO-EUROPEAN CULTURE AND RELIGION**

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**EDGAR C. POLOME**

IN recent years, considerable work has been done in the field of Indo-European culture and religion. This activity is mainly due to three new approaches to old problems :

- (a) in the field of archaeology, extensive excavations in Russia and the Balkans has led to a better understanding of the prehistoric cultures and population movements of the 5th to the 3rd millenium B. C. ;
- (b) in the field of lexical and semantic analysis, the traditional compilation of lengthy lists of correspondences has been supplemented by studies in depth of the diachronic development of the specific connotations of technical terms to discover their original functional meaning ;
- (c) in the field of comparative mythology, a search for the basic organization of the pantheon has led to the recognition of the correlation between social structure and internal hierarchization of the world of the gods.

These new trends can best be illustrated by the works of Marija Gimbutas, Emile Benveniste and Georges Dumézil.

In a number of studies since 1956, Marija Gimbutas has connected the Proto-Indo-Europeans with the Kurgan people, infiltrating Europe and the Near East from the Dnieper-Volga steppe.<sup>1</sup> The only major change in her views was a revised dating of the process, presented at the Indo-European conference in Philadelphia in 1966. Briefly, the Kurgan culture starts in the 5th millenium B.C., beginning its move to central Europe via the Danube in the 4th millenium B.C. In the second half of that millenium, a new culture appears in the northern part of the Balkans, east-central Europe, central Europe, and Trans-Caucasia, marked by complex changes due to 'kurganization': the horse and vehicle are evidenced ; in the eastern Balkan hills, strategic positions are converted to strongholds. But the tribal groups dominated by Kurgan elements really prevail in the 3rd millenium B.C. : this, for Marija Gimbutas, is



the time when most of Europe gets 'kurganized.' The groups have increased their mobility, and their expansion lays the foundation for the IE-speaking peoples of the Bronze and Iron Age : the Germanic tribes deriving from the Corded Ware/Battle-Axe complex in the northwest, the Baltic tribes from the East Baltic-Central Russian Battle-Axe complex ; the Slavic tribes from the north Carpathian Corded Ware/Battle-Axe complex ; the Celtic-Italic-Illyrian-Phrygian tribes to the Central European Corded Ware/Battle Axe complex ; etc.

For Marija Gimbutas, this *Kurgan* culture was not limited to the common feature of the *barrow*, important as it may have been. She also listed such features as : a patriarchal society, a class-system, the existence of small tribal units ruled by powerful chieftains, a predominantly pastoral economy including horse-breeding and plant cultivation, small subterranean or above-ground rectangular huts of timber uprights, small villages and massive hill-forts, crude unpainted pottery decorated with impressions or stabbing, religious elements indicating a sky/sun god and thunder god, horse sacrifices and fire cults.

Benveniste's searching probes into the vocabulary of Indo-European institutions<sup>2</sup> appear to confirm these views : he depicts a society with closely knit kinship links, reinforced by cross-cousin marriage ; the individual is involved in a complex network of allegiances, based on mutual trust, support and confidence in the concentric system of the community : (nuclear family→) expanded family→clan→tribe→people, as well as in the social hierarchy which put the ruling caste of priest-magician-lawmaker on top and the majority of the cattle-raisers/horse-breeders/producers at the bottom, with the warrior-caste, the defenders of the group, in the middle. This society is essentially ethnocentric and xenophobic : it is very hospitable to insiders, but excludes aliens ; within the group, services are rendered as pure favors, without expecting anything in return, beside the normal cycle of exchange, where something is offered to obtain something else by way of reciprocation. In the Indo-European society described by Benveniste, the 'king' 's basic function is to set the rules, to determine what is 'right,' which accounts for his functions being more religious than political. As the I.E. tribes move on the war-path, the need grows for a more dynamic leadership : the people in arms march under the direction of powerful chiefs.

Benveniste does not examine the Indo-European pantheon : his concern about religion remains restricted to the examination of a few basic concepts, e.g., the 'sacred' whose dual aspect : (a) filled with

divine power ; (b) forbidden to human contact, is described strictly on the basis of internal evidence (by studying the connotations of the relevant terms in the IE languages, without recourse to the concepts of *mana* and *tabu* like Wagenvoort or Gonda,<sup>3</sup> but, unfortunately, without discussions of the views of Baetke<sup>4</sup> on Germanic, based on Otto's dichotomy of the 'sacred').

Geroges Dumézil has relentlessly labored since the thirties in a sustained and continued series of efforts to reconstruct the Indo-European functional system of divine powers and some of the great myths in which they are involved.<sup>5</sup> This basic postulate which he derives from Dürkheim and Meillet, is that the IE gods are essentially features of the social system : having recognized, with Benveniste,<sup>6</sup> that a number of early IE societies show a hierarchized tripartite social organization, he uses this as the framework underlying the pantheon of the IE peoples. Each level has its specific concerns, namely :

- (a) the first function (the *priestly* stratum)—the maintenance of magico-religious and juridical sovereignty and order ;
- (b) the second function (the *warrior* stratum)—physical prowess ;
- (c) the third function (the *herder-cultivator* stratum)—the provision of sustenance, the maintenance of physical well-being, plant and animal fertility, and related activities.

It is Dumézil's assumption that this tripartite 'ideology', reflecting three fundamental components of human social behavior and their correlated supernatural counterparts, existed as such in the Proto-Indo-European homeland, that the tradition was carried with them by the migrating groups all over the vast expanse of the territory later dominated by Indo-Europeans, and that elements of it can still be identified in their myths and epics, from the *Veda* and *Mahābhārata* in India, and from the *Edda* to the *Heimskringla* in the Germanic North.

The identification of archeological data with linguistic data is always a rather risky enterprise, and the recent fate of 'Illyrian' which, in the late thirties, was considered as one of the major components of the IE world should give us pause. Indeed, after some of the most prominent European archeologists linked the Lusatian civilization and the spread of the urnfields with the migrations of the alleged Proto-Illyrians,<sup>7</sup> these became the agents of the early Indoeuropeanization of large territories in Europe and even in the Middle East, since Krahe identified them with some of the 'people of the sea' mentioned in Egyptian documents and with the Philistines.<sup>8</sup> Nowadays, the term

'Illyrian' has been reduced to size and applies strictly speaking only to a small territory in the south-eastern part of Dalmatia.<sup>9</sup> The problem has recently led Rüdiger Schmitt<sup>10</sup> to question Marija Gimbutas' Kurgan hypothesis; his main argument is against her assumption that the Proto-Indo-European culture is the only candidate to fit the Kurgan material. Rüdiger Schmitt claims that whatever we assume for Indo-European, e.g., inferring social structure from habitation patterns and burial rites, may have existed in other language (and ethnic) groups. The presence of roots like *\*wegh-* 'drive' or terms for the vehicle, its wheels, its axle, nave, pole, yoke, etc., is not compelling evidence either, since we can reconstruct Proto-Semitic roots for 'drive', 'yoke', and the like. Vehicles were known to the Proto-Finno-Ugrians as well. Along this line of argument, he concludes, with Kronasser (in a 1961 position paper)<sup>11</sup> that linguistic paleontology should remain an autonomous method: only when a particular cultural group has been proven to be IE, i.e. when the linguistic data are sufficiently specific should coordination with archaeological finds or other extralinguistic data be attempted.

The critique of Rüdiger Schmitt in the case of Marija Gimbutas is, however, in many respects rather unfair, since a large number of her assumptions are based on well-established, carefully researched Indo-European data. If we examine the domestication of animals, it is undoubtedly obvious from the lexicon with terms for 'kine', 'bull', 'steer' and related activities ('milking') that cattle raising was the major economic activity of the Indo-Europeans. As Benveniste<sup>12</sup> has demonstrated the possession of livestock was the symbol of wealth and status, as in the cow-keeping kingdoms of the African Great Lakes region. If one looks at the relative chronology of animal husbandry in prehistoric Europe, the introduction of cattle-breeding antedates the penetration of the Kurgan culture in a rather striking way:<sup>13</sup> the early European agriculturists of the Neolithic who established themselves in Greece before 5000 B. C. and reached the Low Countries before 4000 B. C. mainly reared sheep and goats, although they had some cattle, pigs and dogs. The Linear Pottery culture, responsible for the transmission of Agriculture across Europe from Hungary to Holland between 4500 and 3700 B. C., consisted essentially of cattle breeders, who castrated a large portion of their animals, and the cultures that developed later in France, Britain, Scandinavia, as well as in central Europe continued to practice cattle-breeding (beside wheat cultivation) as the basis of their subsistence economy until the end of the Neolithic period. With the Copper Age,

two main animal breeding traditions appear in Europe : one centered on cattle rearing in the early copper mining cultures deriving their ore from the Carpathians ; the other based on the breeding of *goats* and *sheep* spreading over Europe from 3900 to 2000 from Greece to France, with its point of origin somewhere in the Near East in the 5th millenium. This second group appears in east-central Europe ca. 3000 B.C. at the time when the Carpathian copper centre is declining and when the copper starts being imported from the South, especially from Anatolia and the Near East. It is also at this stage that the horse, in the form of the tarpan, appears to have been first domesticated. The earliest evidence comes from the Tripolye culture in southern Russia, and its spread over the rest of Europe is linked with the increase in sheep farming and the mounting trade in copper from the south. Important for the problem of the Indo-Europeans is the fact that the penetration of the horse in northern Europe may be connected with the Single Grave Complex. It should also be noted that cattle prevail over goats, sheep, pigs only in the Bronze age in European settlements as bone-counts in archeological sites have shown. Recent work on the history of domestic animals<sup>14</sup> tends, accordingly, to weaken arguments based on the cattle economy to identify certain prehistoric cultures as Indo-European,<sup>15</sup> but the connection with the horse is particularly significant. The horse has, indeed, acquired a privileged position among the IE domestic animals : it had not only the indispensable auxiliary of the warrior, whether it pulled the chariot or he rode it, but it had also become closely associated with him in life and death : his horse's neighing and whinnying would tell the warrior what fate had in store for him—the Greek heroes of Homer believed in the oracular powers of their horses, and so did the Persians according to Herodotus and the Germanic 'nobility' according to Tacitus, and medieval chronicles tell us about the 'clues' the Slavs were getting from their horses ;<sup>16</sup> the typical sacrifice of the warrior caste, performed by the highest among them—the victorious king [*rājan-*] is the *asvamedha* in India, and parallel horse sacrifices are to be found in Ireland at the coronation of the kings of Ulster, in ancient Gaul, in Thracia and especially in Rome, where the *Equus October* is offered to Mars according to a ritual that shows some similarity with the Indian ;<sup>17</sup>—and when the warrior dies, the symbiosis of man and horse is illustrated by the cremation of the animal on his funeral pyre. Theriomorphic gods appear as horses, e.g., the Celtic goddess Epona, but most characteristic is the equine nature of the *divine twins* and *Dioscuras*, the sons of the Sky-God who appear as 'owners of horses' (*Aśvinau*) in the Veda, having 'white

horses' in the Greek tradition, bearing equine names in the Germanic euhemeristic tale of *Hengist* and *Horsa* about the Saxon conquest of Britain.<sup>18</sup>

In view of the importance of the horse, it is rather significant that Hittite which has the first complete treatise on horse-training ever written—the Kikkuli text dating back to the 14th c. B.C.—does not show the word for 'horse': throughout the text it is represented by the Sumerian ANŠE.KUR.RA, which means literally 'donkey of the foreign country' (occasionally, Accadian *SISU* 'horse' is also used). However, there is a hieroglyphic Hittite *ašua*- 'horse,' which could reflect IE *\*ek'wos*, without having to be borrowed from the Mitanni-Aryan *\*aśva-* 'horse' (=Skt. *aśva-*). Directly derived from this source, however, is the title by which Kikkuli designates himself: Hittite <sup>LU</sup> *aššuššanni-* 'master of the stables.'<sup>19</sup> In this case, the ending *-ni* indicates Hurrian suffixation, so that the term must have reached Hittite via Hurrian.<sup>20</sup> The Mitanni-Aryans lived, indeed, in close contact with the Hurrians, and from the middle of the 15th c. B.C. on the whole Near-Eastern culture seems to have been influenced by new Mitanni-Hurrian techniques of hunting and fighting from a chariot, as these motives appear in the art of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia at that time. The innovators are obviously the Mitanni-Aryans, who must have become known as the best horse-trainers in the Middle-East. If, however, the chariot is an innovation introduced by them, the only common IE heritage is the heavy four-wheeled cart;<sup>21</sup> the terminology is old with terms for 'wheel' like Latin *rota* OHG *rat* (secundarily, Skt. *ratha* 'chariot,' or Gk. *kuklos*, Skt. *cakra-* (secundarily, 'cart' in Tocharian A *kukäl*, B *kokale*); the words for 'axle' and 'hub' are originally names of parts of the body ('shoulder' [G. *Achsel*] and 'navel'); 'shaft' and 'harness' provide good Old Indic: Hittite parallels, namely *išā*=*ḥissa-* and *dhur*=*turiḡa-*; etc.

All of this tends to show that a time perspective must be carefully preserved in the discussion of the cultural material. When we are examining Indo-European society, we have to keep in mind that, like any other human community, it is *not static*. In spite of all the impressive material assembled by Georges Dumézil, and the enlightening solution his approach has brought to some problems, his tripartition of Indo-European society postulates an early specialization of a military caste, which may more tend to reflect the situation of an expanding society conquering new territories or threatened in its homeland. The case of the Germanic peoples may illustrate this state of things: their unsophis-

ticated techniques necessitated the yearly rotation of the fields, and in some areas, the reallocation of arable land was done on the basis of individual needs by the representatives of the community. This 'agrarian communism' is, however, only on record for the regions close to the Roman border,<sup>22</sup> where a substantial part of the male population had to be more or less permanently mobilized, whereas the less apt to fight and the women carried the burden of providing for the needs of the community. This accounts for the situation described by Tacitus in his *Germania*: chieftains would gather a retinue of young warriors who would be 'their pride in time of peace, their support on the battlefield,' and the *comitatus*, as it was called, developed a code of honor in keeping with the ethics of a warrior caste.<sup>23</sup> But there is no evidence that the same system prevailed elsewhere in 'free Germany': there, people owned their land and house, and were free to sow wheat, rye, oats barley in their fields and to rear horses, kine, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry as they wanted. With the movements of population that prevailed after the 3rd century A.D., the military element became undoubtedly a major group in the social complex, and a leader chosen from among them presided over the destiny of the people. Actually, the original IE pastoralist may very well have been both a producer and a warrior: in peace-time, his energies are focused on his animal husbandry, also partly on hunting, but if his group is threatened or goes on the move, his function becomes essentially military—though he may return home to his cattle and fowl like Cincinnatus when the battle is done. The fact that gods like Mars have agrarian connotations can be better understood in this context;<sup>24</sup> similarly, the connection of Thor with the peasants may reflect more than his role as atmospheric god on account of his hammer Mjolnir, the thunderbolt. But Mars has also another function: he is the god associated with the old Italic practice of the *uer sacrum*, which was a religious decision to 'swarm,' i.e. to send the young generation away to find a new habitat. Mars would then appear to them in animal shape and lead them to their new site, and they would be henceforth named after this animal, e.g., the *Picentes*, after the woodpecker (*picus*) which show them the way.<sup>25</sup> This practice of gradual occupation of the soil must have been inherited from IE, and may be the motivation of their migration, far away, presumably in small groups of young warriors with a chieftain, submitting or expelling the former occupant of the area they conquered. This is the way the earlier Hittites present themselves: their invasion of Anatolia is not a massive migration, but rather a slow infiltration, a progressive build-up.<sup>26</sup> The Indo-European penetration

had started already in the 3rd millenium B.C., with the arrival of the Luwians ;<sup>27</sup> by and by they unified the country, but their institutions still reveal in the oldest documents the survival of an assembly of the Hittite nobility—the *pankuš*—which not only advised the king, but also exercised some important juridical prerogatives<sup>28</sup>—just as the Germanic *þing*. This is in keeping with the growing complexity in social organization and the stages of social evolution, with the staggered appearance of definite institutions.<sup>29</sup> In the comparative scheme emerging from a world-wide study of cultures both contemporary and archeologically investigated in the Old and New World, at the tribal stage *unranked* descent groups, pan-tribal associations—‘fraternal orders’ of all those of the same descent—prevail, but as the community grows and diversifies, the extended family ‘swarms’ for economic reasons : moving to establish new settlements leads to profound social changes : *ranked* descent groups, *full-time craft specialization*, and even the central accumulation and redistributive economy evidenced by the Germanic ‘agrarian communism’ or by the ‘feudalism’ developed by the Hittites.<sup>30</sup> A further important change was produced by the shift from a rural to an urban habitat : when the Achaeans made the *polis* the centre of their social, political, and economic activity, the old social ranking based on descent groups was progressively replaced by the groupings defined by their common habitat<sup>31</sup>—true law and social stratification were now established. By the time the Vedic Indians entered the subcontinent the tripartite division *may* have been further elaborated, since the hymn to the Ásvins in the 8th Book of the Rigveda (35 : 16-18) explicitly mentions the priestly order, the nobility and the commoners as the social levels worthy of their blessings. The later Puruṣa hymn (RV X, 90 : 11), however, already mentions the four classes resulting from the *partial* integration of the conquered people in the Aryan society : in the cosmogonic myth, the primeval ‘man’s’ mouth becomes the *bhramans*, his arms (symbols of strength) the *rājanyas* (‘ruling nobility’), his thighs (supports of the body) the *vaiśyas* (the ‘producers’), and his feet, the *śudras* (the original ‘outsiders’). Though only the three upper classes are allowed to participate in the cultural and ritual activities of the Aryans, and the *śudras* were considered as ‘unclean,’ the three other classes showed a lot of flexibility : there was no restriction on intermarriage ; the class membership was not hereditary ; the warriors, in particular, were drawn from the Aryan community at large. Interesting in this context is also a hymn to Indra in the older part of the Rigveda (III.43), where the poet asks the god to make him a ‘herder of men’—like the Homeric *ποιμην*

λαων—and gives his choices in the following order : 'make me king'—and if not, 'make me a priest'—if not, 'give me unperishable riches.'

It is important to keep these facts in mind when evaluating Dumézil's sociological interpretation of the pantheon. Another point is the impact of the dynamic character of Indo-European society on the same pantheon : to be sure, the Indo-Europeans had a god of the bright luminous sky. His name *\*dyeus* is connected with the Latin word for 'day' (*diēs*) as well as 'god' (*deus*—adjectival *divus* 'divine'), which survives ON *tívar* gods', OPruss. *deiwas* 'god', etc. As a god *Dyaus* had receded to the background by the time the Vedic hymns were composed, though references to his former role in the hierogamy with Mother Earth—in the compound *Dyāvapṛthivī*, his omniscience and his creativity—as Father Sky—*Dyaus pitā* parallel to *Jupiter*, still occur in the text. The changeover made *Varuṇa*—together with *Mitra*—the 'powerful and sublime master of the sky'—he 'separated the two worlds', he established order in the universe, he became the universal sovereign, *sahasrākṣa*—'with a thousand eyes'—informed of everything, wielding an ominous magical power—the *maya*—<sup>32</sup> which makes him fit in Dumézil's classification as the Vedic embodiment of magic sovereignty at the first function level. But his position as ruling god is threatened, and the Rigveda gives evidence of the conflict between *Varuṇa*-centered religion and *Indra*-centered religion.<sup>33</sup> The result of the alteration of the original sky-god can be very complex, and when Dumézil reclassifies *Tyr*, the Germanic descendant of *\*dyeus*, as the representative of the *Mitra*-aspect of sovereignty, i.e. the judicial component of the first function (Odin being the Germanic 'magic sovereign') one cannot escape the impression that this focuses only on one aspect of his functional role, namely his breaking a solemn promise and sacrificing his arm to insure the safety of his kin in a heroic gesture paralleling that of Mucius Scaevola in Ancient Rome.<sup>34</sup> Actually, the Germanic god *\*Tiwaz* (> ON *Tyr*) has been associated in the *interpretatio romana* with *Mars* as appears from the translation *Tuesday* for *dies Martis*, but on account of the votive inscription to *Mars Thincsus* by Roman auxiliary troops from the Germanic Low Countries found along Hadrian's Wall in Great Britain, and of the German and Dutch words for *Tuesday* : *Dienstag/dinsdag*, both containing the genitive of the old designation of Germanic tribal assembly of free men, the *þing*, this has been seen as a confirmation of the juridical functions of *\*Tiwaz*.<sup>35</sup> There may however be another way to approach the problem : there seems to be some evidence that *\*Tiwaz* was venerated as tribal god by the Suebians along the



Roman *limes*; on the other hand, the Saxon chronicle of Widukind mentions that they celebrated their victory over the Thuringians by erecting huge columns to Mars whom they called (*H*)*irmin*—a term which reappears in *Irmisul*, the idol Charlemagne is supposed to have destroyed after his victory over the Saxons in 772, and which is described as a cosmic pillar—by Rudolf of Fulda—*universalis columna quasi sustinens omnia*.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, in the abjuration formula the vanquished Saxons had to swear upon conversion to Christianity, the main gods mentioned were Donar, Wodan and their tribal god *Saxnôte*. The question, then, rises: if \**Tīwaz* is identified with Mars, if the Saxons venerate a cosmic god under the name of (*H*)*irmin* and the symbol of a cosmic pillar and identify him with Mars, if the major god of the Saxons, beside Donar and Wodan, is their tribal god *Saxnôte*, is it not plausible that (*H*)*irmin* and *Saxnôte* are merely two names of the old sky-god \**Tīwaz* under his specific functions of *cosmic sovereign* and *protector of the tribe*.<sup>37</sup> His close association with the tribal assembly—the *þing*—would obviously follow from the second aspect of his personality...

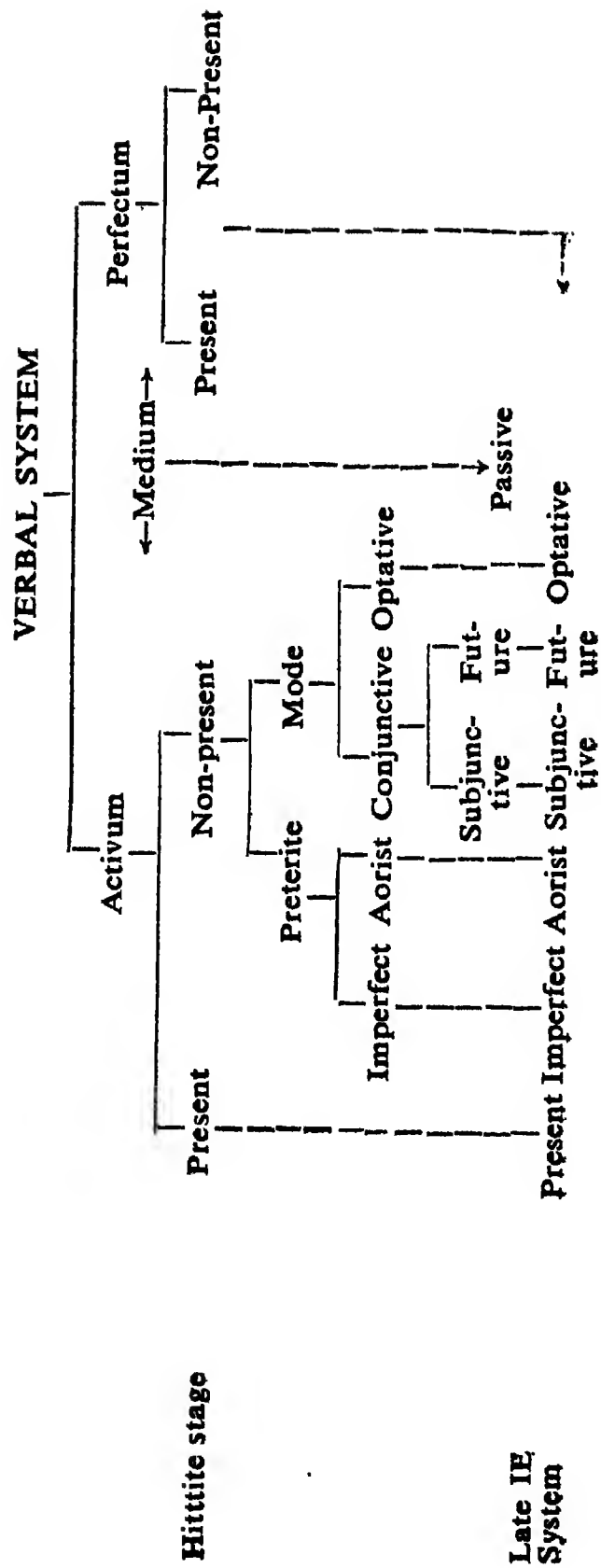
But perhaps the most troubling problem about Dumézil's sociological approach is what it leaves out; to limit ourselves to a few issues: (a) what is the position of the sun-worship in his system? To be sure, the sun-deity, *Sūrya*, occupied a secondary position in the Rigveda, and the sun-cult was not important in ancient Rome and Greece, but in northern Europe, its rich symbolism appears on the rock-drawings and the sun-chariot of Trundholm attests to the importance of the cult.<sup>38</sup> There are also myths about the sun's chariot and its horses closely associated with the divine twins. It is therefore the more puzzling that the validity of Caesar's statement about the Germanic people, that the sun, the fire, and the moon—*Sol*, *Vulcanus*, *Luna*—are their main deities, can not be properly established, but then also *Agni*, the Vedic fire-god, does not fit in Dumézil's system,<sup>39</sup> whereas the antiquity of two Indo-European terms for 'fire', one 'profane'—Hittite *pahhur*, Gk. *πῦρ*, G. *Feuer*, E. *fire*—the other 'sacred'—Skt. *agniḥ*, Lat. *ignis*—also a god name in the Hittite nomenclature *Agniš*.

(b) Why does the system not work for Greece? Palmer has tried to establish some traces of the tripartite division in the repartition of the land in the Mycenacan world,<sup>40</sup> but apart from a few samples like the judgement of Paris or the social organization of Plato's Republic, Dumézil and his disciples have not been able to come up with much that fits their pattern in the Greek mythological world.<sup>41</sup>

(c) Why is the Anatolian world completely left out, except for the Mitanni documents? To be sure, like most of the Near Eastern people at that time, the Indo-European invaders of Anatolia have taken over most of the Sumero-Babylonian mythological tradition and reinterpreted it to suit their own specific needs, and the surprising appearance in the treatises of the 14th century B.C. of the Vedic god names *Mitra*, *Varuṇa*, *Indra* and *Nāsatyā* as the deities of the Mitānni-Hurrian princes in Upper Mesopotamia contrasts with the apparent total loss of Indo-European religious traditions by the earlier Anatolian immigrants. Should one assume that the Anatolians have 'lost' the Indo-European social structure in their new homeland to take over the Oriental type of divine kingship? That is definitely not true until the middle of the 2nd millenium B.C., in the period of the 'Old Kingdom.' Actually, the Indo-Europeans that came into the Middle East in the 3rd millenium B. C. may have represented a less elaborated stage in their societal development so that what appears as a 'loss' is actually an archaic feature. What is suggested here is similar to what is slowly being recognized in the linguistic field: up to quite recently, Hittite was considered as a strongly adulterated type of Indo-European—a kind of creolized Indo-European developed in the Middle Eastern territories conquered by the Hittites under the influence of the submitted and surrounding Semitic and other non-Indo-European populations. Upon closer examination, one fails to recognize such a *repatting* of Hittite on the basis of the languages with which it has come into contact: the Hittite system has not become closer to the Semitic or the Hurrian or any other non-Indo-European Anatolian linguistic pattern.<sup>42</sup> Whatever can be recognized as strictly Indo-European in Hittite appears to be more archaic, though losses are possible as well, e.g., the *dual* which has totally disappeared, whereas it should have been preserved under Semitic influence. If we look at the verb system, we find a model consisting of:

- (1) an indicative and an imperative, but only the *indicative* has a paradigmatic structure, contrasting *present* and *non-present*; *active* and *medio-passive*; *active* ('infectum') and *perfectum*;
- (2) paradigmatic endings characterizing the 'active' versus the *perfectum* and appended vocalic suffixes marking the *present* versus the *non-present* as well as the medio-passive.

This system, as Meid has shown,<sup>43</sup> can form the basis from which the later IE system evidenced by Sanskrit and the classical languages has developed (see table):



Thus, on the linguistic level as well as on the social and religious level, a difference in time perspective would account for the *Sonderstellung*, for the alleged particular position of Anatolian : it would merely reflect an earlier stage of the Indo-European complex—and maybe in the light of all this we should give Sturtevant's Indo-Hittite hypothesis a new look !

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4. *Das Heilige im Germanischen*. Tübingen : C. B. Mohr, 1942.
5. An excellent survey of Dumézil's views in a historical perspective is given by C. Scott Littleton in *The New Comparative Mythology. An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil*. (Berkeley-Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1966, revised edition 1973). This volume contains an extensive bibliography of Dumézil's writings up to 1971. G. Dumézil himself has given a synthesis of his views in his study : *L'idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens*. (Collection Latomus, vol. 31. Brussels, 1958). In recent years, a number of his work have become available in English :
- 1970a *Archaic Roman Religion*. 2 volumes. Translation by Phillpp Krapp of *La religion romaine archaïque* (Paris : Payot, 1966). Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- 1970b *The destiny of the warrior*. Translation by Alf Hiltebeitel of *Heur et malheur du guerrier* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1968). Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- 1973a *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*. Translation edited by Einar Haugen of *Les Dieux des Germains* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France) and four articles on Germanic religion. Berkeley-Los Angeles : University of California Press,
- 1973b *The Destiny of a King*. Translation by Alf Hiltebeitel of lectures given in Chicago, Philadelphia and Los Angeles, 1969-1970. Chicago ; University of Chicago Press.
- Besides, G. Dumézil has been steadily revising and reorganizing his earlier work in a corpus published in the "Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines" (Gallimard, Paris). It includes :
- 1968 *Mythe et épopée. I. L'idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens*. (Revised edition, 1974.)
- 1969 *Idées romaines*.
- 1971 *Mythe et épopée. II. Types épiques indo-européens : un héros, un sorcier, un roi*.
- 1973c *Mythe et épopée. III. Histories romaines*.
- 1975 *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne, suivl de Dix questions romaines*.
- 1977 *Les dieux souverains des Indo-Européens*.
6. Cf. Scott Littleton, 1973 : 50-52 ; see also Benveniste, 1969 : 1, 279-292 ; 1973 : 227-238.
7. Cf., e.g., Julius Pokorny, *Zur Urgeschichte der Kelten und Illyrier* (Halle : M. Niemeyer, 1938).
8. Cf., e.g., Hans Krahe, 'Das Problem der "äglischen" Wanderung in sprachwissenschaftlicher Beleuchtung.' *Geistige Arbeit* 5 : 18 (1938), 1-2 ; 'Der Anteil der Illyrier an der Indogermanisierung Europas'. *Die Welt als Geschichte*

6 (1940), 54-73 ; *Die Indogermanisierung Griechenlands und Italiens* (Heidelberg : C. Winter, 1949).

9. In the fifties, H. Krahe, himself, toned down his claims on the expansion of the "Illyrians" and substituted "Alteuropäisch" for (Proto-) Illyrian to denote the common elements identifiable in the hydronymy of large areas in Europe (cf. *Sprachverwandschaft im alten Europa* [Heidelberg : C. Winter, 1951] ; *Vorgeschichtliche Sprachbeziehungen von den baltischen Ostseeländern bis zu den Gebieten um den Nordteil der Adria* [Wiesbaden : F. Steiner, 1957] ; 'Vom Illyrischen zum Alteuropäischen. Methodologische Betrachtungen zur Wandlung des Begriffes "Illyrisch"' *Indogermanische Forschungen* 59 (1964) 201-213.

The problem was thoroughly reviewed by H. Kronasser in his study : 'Zum Stand der Illyristik' in *Balkansko ezikoznanie/Linguistique Balkanique* 4 (1962), 5-23.

The Illyrian onomastic territory was carefully redefined by R. Katičič in 'Die illyrischen Personennamen in ihrem südöstlichen Verbreitungsgebiet' (*Ziva Antika* 12 (1962), 95-120) and 'Das mitteldalmatische Namensgebiet' (*Ziva Antika* 12 (1963) : 255-292). See also his *Ancient Languages of the Balkans* (The Hague : Mouton, 1976), 1 : 154-188.

10. 'Proto-Indo-European Culture and Archaeology : Some Critical Remarks.' *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 2 (1974) : 279-287.
11. 'Vorgeschichte und Indogermanistik.' In *Theorie und Praxis der Zusammenarbeit zwischen den anthropologischen Disziplinen*. Horn : F. Berger, 1961 : 117-136. Reprinted in A. Scherer (ed.) *Die Urheimat der Indogermanen*. Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968 : 478-509.
12. 'Les valeurs économiques dans le vocabulaire indo-européen'. In *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, edited by G. Cardona, H. Hoenigswald and A. Senn (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 307-320 ; see also *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1969), 1 : 47-61 (English translation, 1973 : 40-51).
13. Jacqueline Murray, *The First European Agriculture. A Study of the Osteological and Botanical Evidence until 2000 B. C.* Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1970, esp. 110-111 ; 'Einige Gesichtspunkte über die Beziehung zwischen Viehzucht und archäologischen Kulturen im Spätneolithikum in Europa.' In *Domestikationsforschung und Geschichte der Haustiere Internationales Symposium in Budapest 1971*. Edited by J. Matolcsi. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973, 177-186.
14. E.g. S. Bokonyi, *History of Domestic Mammals in Central and Eastern Europe*. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974.
15. Benveniste (*Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* 1 [Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1969], 21-45 (English version [1973], 19-39) illustrated the importance of sheep, goats, and pigs in Indo-European animal husbandry. As Marija Gimbutas has shown (e.g. 'La fin de l'Europe ancienne,' *La Recherche* 9 (No. 87, March 1978), 230), what took place is a confrontation of two cultures : the matriarchal agricultural society of Ancient Europe, established

in sizable farming communities and the patriarchal pastoral—more mobile, dynamic and expansionistic Kurgan civilization.

The role of cattle in the Indo-European world is illustrated by its myths, especially those described by Bruce Lincoln in 'The Indo-European Cattle-Raiding Myth' (*History of Religions* 16: 1 [1976], 42-65.)

16. Rudolf Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus erläutert* (3rd edition, revised by W. Lange and H. Jankuhn), Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1967, 198.
17. Cf. especially G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 224-227; *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 145-156.
18. Donald Ward, *The Divine Twins. An Indo-European Myth in Germanic Tradition*. (Folklore Studies, vol. 19; Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 11-12; 54-56.
19. Cf. Annelies Kammenhuber, *Hippologia Hethitica* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1961), 13-14, 23-34, 354, 362, 364; M. S. Drower, 'The Domestication of the Horse' (in *The Domestication and Exploitation of Plants and Animals*, edited by P. Ucko and G. Dimbleby [Chicago-New York: Aldine-Atherton, 1969], 471-478), 472.
20. Manfred Mayrhofer, *Die Indo-Arier im alten Vorderasien* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1966), 10 (fn. 4); Annelies Kammenhuber, *Die Arier im Vorderen Orient* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1968), 208-211, 223-224. Mayrhofer (*Die Arier im vorderen Orient—ein Mythos?* [Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, Vol. 294, Nr. 3, 1974] 15) considers the form simply as 'Aryan' and does not list it among the derivations with the Hurrian morpheme *-ne* (> Hittite *-nmi*) in the Kikkuli horse training treatise.
21. Cf. Kammenhuber, *Hippologia Hethitica* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1961), 24-25 (with fn. 101); R. A. Crossland, 'Immigrants from the North' (*Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. I, Part 2, 3rd edition, Chapter XXVII [Cambridge University Press, 1971]), 844, 873-874. The four-wheeled cart was introduced in Europe by the Kurgan culture as early as 3000 B. C. A clay model dating back to 2000 B. C. was found at Budaörs, north of Budapest.
22. Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* VI, 22 (cf. G. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna* [Paris: Gallimard, 1948; 2nd edition], 154-159; *Les dieux souverains des Indo-Européens* [Paris: Gallimard, 1977], 202).
23. Tacitus, *Germania*, chapters 13-15 (cf. R. Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus erläutert*, 3rd edition by W. Lange and H. Jankuhn (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1967), 221-244). On the significance of the institution in the Germanic world, cf. especially D. H. Green, *The Carolingian Lord* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965). On its Indo-European context, see E. Benveniste, 1969: 103-121; 1973: 84-100.
24. As K. Latte (*Römische Religionsgeschichte* [Munich: C. B. Beck, 1960], 114) points out, he is functionally connected with the 'hostile, unfamiliar outside

- world' (cf. Benveniste, 1969 : 314 ; 1973 : 256-257), but G. Dumézil (*Archaic Roman Religion* [Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1970], 213-240) is definitely right in rejecting the view that he was essentially an 'agrarian' god (cf. also Latte's argument [114-121] on the 'military' [kriegerisch] character of the ritual activities connected with Mars).
25. Latte, 1960 : 124 ; Dumézil, 1970 : 208.
  26. Kurt Bittel, *Grundzüge der Vor-und Frühgeschichte Kleinasiens* (Tübingen : F. Wasmuth, 1950, 2nd edition), 52.
  27. Bittel, 1950 : 54-55 ; R. A. Crossland, 'Immigrants from the North' (*Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. I, Part 2, 3rd edition, Chapter XXVII [Cambridge : University Press, 1971], 842. Friedrich Cornelius, *Geschichte der Hethiter* (Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 43-45, 292-293.
  28. Cf. Albrecht Götze, *Kleinasien* (Munich : C. H. Beck, 1957), 86-88. On the IE context of the Hittite *pankuš*, cf. F. Cornelius, 1976 : 54-56 (based on his *Geistesgeschichte der Frühzeit II* : 2 [Leyden : E. J. Brill, 1967], 13-16, 241-242).
  29. John E. Pfeiffer, *The Emergence of Society* (New York : McGraw-Hill, 1977), 103.
  30. Bittel, 1956 : 43 ; Götze, 1957 : 102-107 ; Cornelius, 1976 : 68-70.
  31. Benveniste, 1969 : 309-310 ; 1973 : 252-253.
  32. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York : Meridian Books, 1963), 66-72.
  33. Edgar Polomé, 'Approaches to the Study of Vedic Religion.' In Paul Hopper (ed.), *Studies in Descriptive and Historical Linguistics. Festschrift for Winfred P. Lehmann* (Amsterdam : J. Benjamins, 1977), 405-415.
  34. Cf., e.g., *Mitra-Varuna* (Paris : Gallimard, 1948 ; 2nd edition), 165-169, 174-177 ; *Mythe et épopée I* (Paris : Gallimard, 1968), 424-428 ; III (Paris : Gallimard, 1973), 268-274.
  35. Cf., e.g., G. Dumézil, *Gods of the Ancient Northmen* (translation edited by E. Haugen, Berkeley-Los Angeles : University of California, 1973), 42-48. On Tuesday as translation of *dies Martis*, cf. especially Udo Strutynski, 'Germanic Divinities in Weekday Names.' *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* 3 (1975), 363-384.
  36. See, in particular, Jan de Vries, 'La valeur religieuse du mot germanique *irmin*.' *Cahiers du Sud* 1952 : 18-27.
  37. Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte II* (Berlin : W. de Gruyter, 1957, 2nd edition), 16, 18,
  38. Cf., e.g., Peter Gjelling and Hilda Ellis Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun* (London : J. M. Dent, 1969), 9-26, 136-137, 140-145, 180-183. See further J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte I* (Berlin : W. de Gruyter, 1956 ; 2nd edition), 110-115, 355-358.
  39. He is described as a kind of marginal god on account of his appearance at the beginning or/and the end of the list of the Vedic divinities to whom



sacrifices are offered (cf. G. Dumézil, *Ancient Roman Religion* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970], 322-323; see also C. Scott-Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* [Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973; 2nd edition], 15-16, 106.

40. L. R. Palmer, *Mycenaeans and Minoans* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 93-99.
41. Cf. G. Dumézil, 'Les trois fonctions dans quelques traditions grecques,' (*Hommage à Lucien Febvre*, vol. 2 [Paris: Armand Colin, 1953], 25-32; C. Scott-Littleton, 'Some Possible Indo-European Themes in the "Iliad".' (*Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, edited by Jaan Puhvel [Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970], 229-246.
42. See, e.g., Annalies Kammenhuber, *Hethitisch, Palaisch, Luwisch und Hieroglyphenluwisch* (*Handbuch der Orientalistik I. 2.1-2. A Kleinasiatische Sprachen* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, 119-357], 266-269.
43. Wolfgang Meid, 'Probleme der räumlichen und zeitlichen Gliederung des Indogermanischen' (in Helmut Rix [ed.], *Flexion und Wortbildung. Akten der V. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft* [Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1975], 204-219). The model presented here is taken from Erich Neu, 'Zur Rekonstruktion des indogermanischen Verbalsystems' (*Studies in Greek, Italic and Indo-European Linguistics Offered to Leonard R. Palmer*, edited by A. Morpurgo Davies and W. Meid [Innsbruck, 1976], 239-254), 252. Basic arguments for this analysis of Indo-European verbal morphology are to be found in J. Kurylowicz, *The Inflectional Categories of Indo-European* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter: 1964), 56-147, and C. Watkins *Geschichte der indogermanischen Verbalflexion* (= *Indogermanische Grammatik. III. Formenlehre*. Vol. 1; Heidelberg: Carl Winter: 1969.

## THE TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

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KAJAL SENGUPTA

FRAMED between Chaucer and Shakespeare Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* has suffered by comparison, and even while acclaiming the beauty of the poem, critics damn it with their faint praise. "The *Testament* forms a not unworthy pendant to Chaucer's poem" is the best that H. S. Bennet<sup>1</sup> can say and Patrick Cruttwell<sup>2</sup> comments "In subtlety of characterization Henryson does not try, or need, to rival Chaucer; his heroine is 'given' him by his forerunner and he does not try to change her." Henryson's poem, however, can be shown to be not only equal to, but in many ways greater than, Chaucer's or Shakespeare's rendering of the story.

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* has the complex pattern of a modern psychological novel—the plot develops out of the action and interaction of three or four characters upon each other. The background of the Trojan War has been practically eliminated and our attention is held entirely by the words, deeds and thoughts of Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus, with Deiphoebus, Diomed and Hector appearing briefly backstage. Architecturally, the poem is a complete and complex structure, but it has not been built on palatial proportions; it has, rather, a Gothic intricacy of detail and every inch of space has been carved over with patterns, traceries and designs.

Shakespeare's play has epic dimensions—it is not at all the love story of Troilus and Cressida though their names supply the title of the play. We get a panoramic view of the Trojans and the Greeks ranged on either side and the mighty issues at stake in the long drawn out wars. When recalling scenes from the play, one thinks first of the great war-councils and of Ulysses' speech on order. Troilus, the lover, is only one aspect of Troilus, the man, and when Troilus argues with Hector it is the warrior-statesman who speaks, not the lover.

In Henryson the first thing that strikes us is the almost naked simplicity of the tale. Gone is Chaucer's complexity, gone Shakespeare's epic dimensions. Against the 8239 lines of Chaucer's poem and the 3364

lines of Shakespeare's five acts, the story is narrated here in a bare 616 lines. But

In small proportions we just beauties see  
And in short measures life may perfect be.

Henryson's story is no longer the story of Troilus and Criseyde, it is the *Testament of Cresseid*. Cresseid alone is his subject-matter and the title itself is sufficient indication that the poet has shifted his ground and that he is concerned, not with an age, not with society, not even with human relationships, but with the drama of one single individual—the drama of Cresseid's journey to God.

In Chaucer, Criseyde's character reveals a highly complex psychological analysis of different states of minds, but it is a kind of static rather than growing psychology. At particular moments the searchlight of Chaucer's perception explores every nook and cranny, every little crevice and ramification of Criseyde's mind so that the whole is laid bare, and we marvel at Chaucer's ability to explore the multitudinous thoughts of the human mind. But though Criseyde is thus analysed, she herself does not really change. The Criseyde of the end is no different from the Criseyde of the beginning, "tendre-herted, slydyng of corage" (V 825), dependent and weak. That the character is conceived of in this manner is, in fact, consistent with the philosophical framework of *Troilus and Criseyde*, for man is revealed as essentially a passive creature, subject to the vagaries of Fate, Destiny and Fortune. Right through the poem we are made to feel a deep sense of overruling Destiny; again and again Fortune steps in and changes the lives of the human beings despite their deliberate avowals to the contrary. Troilus stands in the temple mocking all lovers, but

O blynde world, O blynde entencioun !

... ..

For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde (l. 211, 238).

Criseyde prepares to go home from Pandarus' supper

But O Fortune, executrice of wyrdes,

O influences of thise hevenes hye !

Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes,

Though to us bestes ben the causes wrie. (III. 617-620)

and Troilus, when he hears that Criseyde must go back to the Greek camp, reaches the sad conclusion

For al that comth, comth by necessitee :

Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee (IV 958-9).

Appropriately, in this setting, Chaucer's treatment of Criseyde is the study of human *reactions* rather than the study of mental growth.

In Shakespeare we find a more dynamic kind of analysis but the process analysed here is not limited to the inner mental change of one or two individuals. A whole age, an entire system of values is in the melting pot and out of the shifting patterns, new modes of life, new systems of thought are seen to emerge. It is the birth of the Renaissance that Shakespeare describes and he becomes the psychologist, not of a man, but of an age. How the emergent Renaissance values affect individuals inevitably forms part of Shakespeare's study and this is seen particularly in the presentation of Troilus' character. The new value of Honour, the desire to eternalise the temporal, the consequent frustration—

This is the monstrosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confin'd (III ii 77-79) [contrast Browning's romantic idealism in

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp  
Or what's a heaven for]<sup>4</sup>

and the final shock of disillusionment—

This she ? No ; this is Diomed's Cressida (V ii 135)

—all show the new philosopher at grips with and trying to come to terms with life.<sup>5</sup>

But our concern is with Cressida. What attention has Shakespeare paid to her ? She is there as the object of Troilus' love, but is she really an important character in the play ? Helen seems to be of greater significance because it is she who sparks off the mighty arguments at the camp. Helen and Cressida in actual fact play parallel roles for they both serve merely as the points on which the wheels of action have to rest before they can be set in motion.

This being her role in the play, Cressida inevitably slips into secondary significance and is not treated by Shakespeare with very great psychological depth. Cressida is the typical shallow-minded coquette—too superficial to be regarded seriously. Ulysses sums her up rightly

There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,  
Nay, her foot speaks, her wanton spirits look out  
At every joint and motive of her body.  
.....Set them down

For sluttish spoils of opportunity  
And daughters of the game. (IV. V 55-63)

There is not much depth in her and there is not much depth in Shakespeare's treatment of her.

In a sense, therefore, both Chaucer and Shakespeare, though for different reasons, present us with a woman in whom there is no mental or psychological growth. It is here that Henryson differs from them and, in a way, scores over them both. Sandwiched as he is between the two mighty giants of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, small as his poem is in comparison to theirs, humble as his own aim is—merely to

report the lamentatioun  
And wofull end of this lustie Cresseid (ll.68-69),

his poem nevertheless acquires a significant stature and bears the stamp of genius. For he gives us something that neither Chaucer nor Shakespeare did—a Cresseid that grows, changes, matures in the course of a mere eighty-six stanzas. Her first speech—petulant, irresponsible, rebellious—and her last—humble, self-critical, full of remorse—show the great change that has taken place in her, and at the end of the poem she becomes a sadder but definitely a much wiser woman.

## II

Henryson's poem is remembered by most readers because of two incidents that occur in it—a) Cresseid is stricken with leprosy (ll.334-343) and b) towards the end of the poem an encounter takes place between Troilus and Cresseid in which neither recognises the other and Troilus, unaware of the ironic implications of his act, gives alms to the disfigured leper woman in front of him. Everything else in the poem is usually forgotten and too many critics have found it convenient to disregard the real significance of these incidents and to put their own interpretation on them. This interpretation, arising out of their predetermined conclusion that Henryson's poem is but an extension of Chaucer's is, generally, that Cresseid is punished because she was faithless to Troilus. The last encounter, they conclude, reveals Henryson's skilful use of pathos.

Nothing could be further from the truth. If we carefully analyse the sequence of events in the poem it becomes patently clear—as I intend to show—that the curse of leprosy has nothing whatever to do with her

*falsing* of Troilus. The disease affects her long after she has left Troilus. Henryson does not specifically mention how much time has elapsed, but Cresseid's gradual transformation from the lover of Troilus to first, the mistress of Diomed, then a common prostitute in the Greek camp, then an abandoned woman rejected by all men, then one fleeing from the camp to find refuge in her father's house—this transformation did not take place in a day. In all this time nothing happens to destroy her beauty or rack her body with disease. Even at this stage Henryson could have shown the leprosy to be a direct consequence of the life she had led, because this affliction, according to medieval medical theory, was often contracted by syphilitic infection.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps this association lay at the back of Henryson's mind and, certainly, our awareness of it adds a touch of grim physical realism to the story. But Henryson deliberately elides over this possible explanation. He most clearly tells us that the terrible curse of leprosy falls on her much later because of something else, something that she says and does *after* she has taken asylum in her father's house, something that is far more serious than the mere sin of *Lechery*.

In the inner recesses of her father's house, in the 'secreit orature' of Venus and Cupid, Cresseid angrily calls out on her Gods :

Allace that ever I maid you sacrifice :  
.. .... O fals Cupide, is nane to wyte bot thow  
And thy mother, of lufe the blind goddes ! (11.126-135)

This blasphemous speech, Henryson tells us, shakes the very foundations of the universe. The fixed framework of the heavens moves as Cupid rings his silver bell, and in an extraordinary and magnificent pageant of the skies the seven planets descend from their spheres and arrange themselves with stern disapproval in front of Criseyde. The pageant continues and develops into one of the most fantastic trial scenes in literature, with Cupid as the public prosecutor, Mercury 'the foirspeikar in the parliament' Saturn and Cynthia as joint judges and the other planets as a silent jury sanctioning the verdict and pronouncing the ultimate punishment of leprosy.

What was Henryson's purpose in giving us this extraordinary episode ? There is no doubt that structurally this is the central and most significant point of the story, the climax of the whole drama. It is with this episode that the doom of leprosy has been linked up. The punishment, therefore, has nothing whatever to do with Cresseid's earlier actions—it is a direct consequence of the fact that Cresseid shook her

fist at Venus and Cupid, defied her gods and put all moral responsibilities on them.

Though Henryson had modestly started by saying that he would merely give the concluding chapter to Chaucer's story, *The Testament of Cresseide* is no mere epilogue to *Troilus and Criseyde*. It is a complete and self-sustained drama for both the Crime and the Punishment are contained within its pages. The story ends with her death, but death itself becomes transmuted into something ennobling for, before she dies, Cresseid has endured the Hell of her punishment, passed through the Purgatory of her sufferings and has entered the Paradise of true wisdom and understanding. If Troilus' soul in Chaucer's poem

blisfully is went

Up to the holughnesse of the eighthe spere (*T&C*. V 1808-9)

Cresseid's spirit, redeemed and purified, will walk with Diana

'In waist woddis and wellis' (*T of C*. 1.588)

But that, to quote Dostoyevsky, is "the beginning of a new story the, story of the gradual rebirth of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his gradual passing from one world to another, of his acquaintance with a new and hitherto unknown reality."<sup>7</sup>

### III

Henryson begins the poem with himself but the prologue is so woven into the main texture of the story that we cannot think of it as a prologue at all. It is a cold evening in April with showers of hail descending from the north. Venus is rising in the East and as he looks out of the window he wishes to pay her reverence even as he has done in the past. But like Gower in *Confessio Amantis* he is too old to be her servant. With wry humour he therefore decides that instead of the heat of passion he will warm himself by the fire in his chamber. We have a cosy picture of a middle-aged Henryson settling down comfortably in front of the hearth with a drink in his hand, while the Arctic blasts rage outside. To make the evening complete he picks up something to read and, with Venus so recently in his thoughts, he appropriately takes out Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The skilful movement of this dramatic introduction not only leads us directly to the heart of the story, it establishes a homely, realistic

framework against which Cresseid's fate will be presented. It overleaps the distances of time and space and the Greek woman enters most naturally into the immediacy of our world. The setting is significant also as an ominous forewarning of what is going to happen. It is not 'the joly tyme of May' when 'the floures gynne for to sprynge' (*Legend of Good Women* II. 36-38) but 'ane doolie sessoun', bitter and cold, a time for doleful thoughts for 'ane cairfull dyte'. Significantly, this is the moment that Venus rises, shedding her beams far and wide. This unusual association of Venus presiding over a cold and winter evening prepares us for a story of sorrow and suffering in which Venus will continue to remain in the ascendent.

With Chaucer's book in front of him, Henryson muses over the story contained within its pages and observes that if anyone wishes to know more about Troilus, let him read Chaucer. Henryson thus re-iterates an obvious point that Chaucer had made at the beginning of his poem, that he will tell 'the double sorwe of Troilus'. The opening stanzas of *Troilus and Criseyde* concern themselves entirely with Troilus and in 11.54-5 Chaucer repeats

ye may the double sorwes here  
Of Troilus in lovyng of Criseyde.

Criseyde comes into the story so that the story of Troilus' sorrow can be told. Admittedly, Chaucer's absorption in her complex psychology brings her to the foreground of the tale but again, towards the end Chaucer draws a veil gently over her fate

But al shall passe ; and thus I take my leave. (V 1085)

The poem concludes with an account of Troilus dying on the battlefield and ultimately being led by Mercury to

the pleyn felecite  
That is in hevene above. (V 1818-9)

Henryson draws our attention to this ending (11.43-60) and tells us that his concern is not with Troilus but with Cresseid. Henryson's story proper begins from line 71. This is the beginning of Cresseid's drama and it is no more a continuation of Chaucer's poem than is the *Aeneid* a continuation of the *Iliad*. Chaucer merely provides the take-off point, for every story must begin at a specific moment within a sequence of events. The *consequences* of her desertion of Troilus form the *first act* of this particular drama.

These consequences are described with great pathos in the five stanzas (11.71-105) that follow. In moving words Henryson tells us that



she is now reaping the bitter fruits of her earlier act of betrayal. Diomed, having satisfied his lust, has no further use for her and casts her out of his home. The humiliation and degradation of this experience is powerfully conveyed by a single phrase

Quhen Diomeid had all his appetyte  
*And mair* (italics mine)

With two words Henryson conjures up before our eyes the ugly ending to the affair—Cresseid continues to offer her body to Diomed and he continues to gratify his physical urges on her, even though this no longer gives him any pleasure. Eventually the now mechanical act becomes so repulsive that he summarily gets rid of her.

Thus abandoned, she has no joy left in life and she becomes a common prostitute, not because she wants to, but because no other course is left open to her.

Than desolait scho walkit up and down.  
 And sum men sayis into the court commoun (11.76-77)

Eventually even the soldiers begin to look down upon her. Spurned and despised by all, she finds she has no place left in society and, disguising herself, she secretly goes to her father's house.

The setting has been set and the action of Henryson's drama will now begin. But first it is important to analyse the significance of the condition in which Cresseid now finds herself. This brief survey makes it clear that Cresseid is now enduring the world's censure and this is retribution enough for one who had been 'the flour and *A per se*/of Troy and Greece' (11.78-79). This is her punishment for her betrayal of Troilus and the judgement that we dread upon this bank and shoal of time *has* come full circle on her.

Henryson however, refuses to condemn and excusing Cresseid's 'womanheid', her 'wisedome and fairness' he blames Fortune alone for what has happened—'and nothing throw the gilt of the' (11.90-91). Henryson's remark, deliberately made at this point, determines the reader's own attitude, since it is through his eyes that we are looking at Cresseid. Later, when Saturn passes judgement he further exclaims

O cruel Saturne, fraward and angrie,  
 Hard is thy dome and to malitious (11.323-24)

Yet as the story progresses Cresseid (and inevitably, through her, the reader) grows in understanding, and before she dies she blames none but

herself. Cresseid at the end is therefore much wiser than the reader himself was at the beginning of the story. This deliberate manipulation of the reader's own moral sense indicates the sophisticated mastery of Henryson's art. We are not—he seems to tell us—omniscient judges over Cresseid's destiny. We are as fallible in our judgement as she is, and as we come to realise this, a great bond of sympathy is established between the heroine and ourselves. Henryson's comment thus becomes the choric comment of imperfect mankind.

The meeting between Cresseid and her father is most moving in its tenderness. He asks no questions, casts no blame on her, and without hesitation opens his door to his daughter. Calchas too, like Henryson, like us, has not the heart to find fault. Cresseid at this stage is still Chaucer's Criseyde and Henryson extends to her—through his own comments and through her father's welcome—the pity that reigns in gentle hearts, the pity that Chaucer gave her.

She is still, to all appearances, the same gentle lady whom we had learnt to love, and understand so well in Chaucer and whom Chaucer could not condemn :

She so sory was for hire untrouthe

Iwis I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe. (*T&C.V* 1098-9)

But in the secret oratory of her father's house this passive gentle creature who was 'so slydyng of corage' suddenly revolts against her fate and angrily accuses the Gods (II.126-140). This burst of violent anger takes us by surprise because it is the last thing we expected from the woman we had known. Chaucer's static character thus springs to life and Henryson's drama begins.

This is the first of four speeches that Henryson gives her. She is petulant, angry and full of self-pity and in the presence of such action the detached compassion of Chaucer disappears and is replaced on our part by amazement, excitement and direct involvement in the dramatic metamorphosis of character. In her speech she accuses Venus and Cupid of treachery and betrayal and has the temerity to abjure her faith. —'Allace that ever I maid you sacrifice' (II.126). We have moved out of Chaucer's medieval world of Fate and Destiny into a more dynamic state of things. Fortune's wheel had loomed large in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the medieval attitude of acceptance was always present in the essential passivity of the characters. In this first speech Henryson's Cresseid also holds the Gods responsible but the old submission has gone. Philosophically, however, her position is untenable for she is, contradic-

torily, both resigned and rebellious. She is resigned in the sense that she still believes that the Gods control human life but she lacks the Boethian acceptance, the faith that Fate's decree is part of a compassionate God's beneficent scheme of things '.....it is by goodness that He rules all things, since He rules them by Himself and we have agreed that He is the good. It is this which is the helm and rudder....., by which the fabric of the universe is kept constant and unimpaired.' (*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, Bk III Ch.12). Again, 'whether the work of Fate is done with the help of divine spirits of Providence, or whether the chain of Fate is woven by the soul of the universe.....one thing is certainly clear : the simple and unchanging plan of events is Providence, and Fate is the ever-changing web, the disposition in and through time of all the events which God has planned in his simplicity.' (Ibid. IV Ch.6) We see in Cresseid a medieval mind rebelling against the medieval order without fully realising the implications of this rebellion, that there can be no freedom without responsibility. When ultimately this realisation comes she is also able to return with humility to the gods of faith.

Immediately after this heretical speech she falls into a swoon and the grand spectacle of the Heavenly court-room begins. The seven planets --Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Phoebus, Venus, Mercury and Cynthia--take their places, Cupid calls the court to order and the arraignment of Cresseid begins. Cupid's speech clearly indicates where Cresseid has sinned : it is necessary to quote it in full :

'Lo ! quod Cupide, 'quha will blaspheme the name  
Of his awin god, outhir in word (or) deid,  
To all goddis he dois baith lak and schame,  
And suld have bitter panis to his meid.  
I say this by yone wretchit Cresseid,  
The quhilk throw me was sum tyme flour of lufe,  
Me and my mother starklie can reprufe,  
Saying of hir greit infelicitie  
I was the caus and my mother Venus,  
Ane blind goddes hir cald that nicht not se,  
With sclander and'defame injurious :  
Thus hir leving unclene and lecherous  
Scho wald returne on me and my mother  
To quhome I schewe my grace above all uther.  
And sen ye ar all sevin deificait,  
Participant of devyne sapience,

This greit (injure) done to our hie estait  
 Me think with pane we suld mak recompence,  
 Was never to goddes done sic violence.  
 As weill for yow as for myself I say ;  
 Thairfoir ga help to revenge I yow pray.'

Not once does Cupid refer to the act of wrong-doing Cresseid had done to Troilus. That is outside the terms of reference of this court of enquiry. It is not on the moral but on the religious level that the entire accusation is levelled, for Cupid is not concerned with her relation to other humans, his sole concern is her attitude to God. Henryson's intention is clear. Like the unknown dramatist who wrote *Everyman*, he is presenting a story in which the solitary protagonist is Man in relation to God, and human relationships are relevant only in so far as they throw light on this central drama.

Cupid's speech indicates also his attitude to human action—

'Hir leving unclene and lecherous  
 Scho wald returne on me and my mother.'

If Cresseid's blasphemous words had taken us by surprise, Cupid's reaction is also unexpected, for he makes it clear that man is responsible for his own action and he should not attempt to pass the burden on to God. This is indeed cutting across the medieval theological dispute on Fate and Free-Will. Lady Philosophy had taken infinite pains to explain to Boethius how God's fore-knowledge can co-exist with man's Free Will : 'God sees those future events which happen of free will as present events ; so that these things when considered with God's sight of them do happen necessarily as a result of the condition of divine knowledge ; but when considered in themselves they do not lose the absolute freedom of their nature' (V ch. 6). Cupid does not show any such concern. In Henryson's world therefore it is not Cresseid alone who is changing, the Gods also seem different. Cupid's words may appear vindictive but in fact that is not so. It is not Divinity taking revenge to protect his own ego, it is Divinity insisting that man must take upon himself the burden of his own life. The birth of individualism in man, after all, requires a readjustment in the concept of God.

And so, Cresseid's purgatorial suffering begins. When she awakens from her swoon and sees the loathsome reflection of her leprous face on her mirror her limited intelligence immediately puts a wrong interpretation on the action of the Gods. This is her second speech (11.351-357) and though it is only seven lines it is significant because it shows that she

has understood nothing of what has happened. She transfers the motivations of her own weak ego to Cupid and declares that her only offence is that she has upset the vanity of the 'craibit goddis.' Self-pity blinds her so that she can understand neither herself nor the gods.

Later, when her father comes to her, she puts the blame on fate—'Sic is my wickit weird' (1.385)—and realising that she cannot stay there, goes out by a private gate to a village half-a-mile away, to a leper asylum. At the beginning of the story she had been cast out from the camp, now she is cast out from all normal human relationships. Twice rejected by society, she enters the world of outcasts, but mentally and emotionally she refuses to identify herself with them. She does not eat, she does not drink, and remains in a dark corner of the house alone, while significantly, night falls outside and black clouds overwhelm the sky.

In this condition, she makes her third speech—*The Complaint of Cresseid*. This is the longest of her speeches—11.407-469. There is an elegiac sadness in the lines as she bids goodbye for ever to all the happy things of life she has known in the rich and splendid world of courtly love. Never again will the Garden of Love bid her welcome, never again will the Month of May return, the season when, according to Chaucer, lovers do the 'observaunces that longeth onto love and to nature' (*L.G.W.* 1.151). She advises all the fair ladies of Troy and Greece to take her story as an example and warning that nothing lasts in life. It is the old *carpe diem* theme—'Nocht is your fairness but ane faiding flour' (*Testament of Cressid* l. 461) Cresseid's mood indicates, in a way, a regression to the old Chaucerian attitude of passivity and resignation for she still refuses to take the responsibility for her actions. But there is a new note in the Complaint. Something *has* been learnt, for anger has been curbed and though she is still preoccupied with Self, her wilful ego is being broken down. Gone is the querulous petulance, the personal vendetta with the gods. She realises that she cannot fight them and though even now full of self-pity, she no longer regards her fate as the vindictive act of the Gods, and sublimating her own tragedy, as it were, identifies it with the fate of all mankind.

True self-knowledge however, has not yet come and so her sojourn in Purgatory continues. More humiliation lies ahead. She cannot even allow herself the luxury of grief. She must learn to lead the leper's life, learn to clap her clapper to and fro, and pressed by cold and hunger and the body's needs, she has to force herself to go out and beg. From this point begins the regeneration of Cresseid. As she learns to accept her

fate and painfully struggles to identify herself with the leper community, she returns slowly to the world of human relationships and rediscovers sympathy and understanding in her fellow-beings. The gentle affection of the leper-lady who goes to help her in her sorrow is a touching re-affirmation of life and love—the more movingly so because it occurs among those who have been cast out from the world of life and love.

But the worst is yet to be. Like Job, she must suffer to a degree beyond which there can be no greater suffering and her humiliation reaches the ultimate point of endurance when, some days later, Troilus passes by. Troilus does not recognise the disfigured leper standing in front of him, begging for alms, but some faint chord of memory is struck and his thoughts turn to the woman he had loved; thus moved 'for knichtlie pietie' and for 'memoriall of fair Cresseid' he gives money and jewels to her. Cresseid too, with her leprosy-affected eyesight fails to perceive in this knight her one-time lover, and when the Trojan troops move away, she asks the others, 'Who is this generous lord?' The reply comes 'Schir Troylus it is, gentill and fre' (1.536) and she falls to the ground in a swoon.

When she recovers, she is a transformed creature and the lament that follows—the fourth speech of Cresseid—is spoken, in sorrow yes, but also in wisdom, in humility, in acceptance. Now at last, as she utters the refrain :

O fals Cresseid, and trew knight Troilus

the veil drops from her eyes. As in her earlier Complaint, she admonishes all lovers but it is a different advice that she now gives. Where formerly she had warned them not to trust fickle Fortune, now she warns them to beware of fickle women like herself. She admits with deep humility that all are not like her, even if their number is not many, and ends the lament with :

Nane but myself as now I will accuse. (1.574)

After this, she takes a piece of paper and writes her will—The Testament of Cresseid—leaving all her jewels and wealth to the leper folk and requesting that Troilus be informed of her death. Finally she commends her soul to Diana and thus she dies.

From the moment that Cresseid had begun to lead the leper's life, the change in her character was indicated. The sympathy that the leper woman had extended to her had not been given in vain for Cresseid had not spurned it and through acceptance she herself had learnt to approach her fellow-beings with sympathy and understanding. When Troilus

departed, even before she was aware of his identity, she had most naturally associated herself with the outcast community by assuming that what he had given was for them all. It was not a private gift to her but he 'has done to *us* so greit humanity' (italics mine). Now in her last will and testament her humility and her humanity are most clearly evident. She does not despise the lepers but identifying herself with them wholly, leaves all her gold and ornaments to them. Her other elements she gives to baser life—

I beteiche my crops and carioun

With wormis and with taidis to be rent. (ll. 577-8)

She is now 'all fire and air,' like Cleopatra she has 'immortal longings' in her. Thus purified, chaste, inviolate, she commends her soul to the Goddess of Chastity and we know that Heaven will take the prodigal child back in its fold with tenderness and love.

An alternative title to the poem may well be *The Return of Cresseid* for the story is of one who had been cast out by man and cast out by God and who, in the end, returns to Man and is received back by God. It has been a painful and arduous journey, for Cresseid has traversed long distances from blind self-pity to wise self-knowledge, from selfish pride to humility, from blasphemy to ultimate re-union with God. Her story is the story of sin, suffering and redemption; she is tragic in a way that Chaucer's Criseyde was not and Shakespeare's Cressida was not to be.

#### IV

Seen in this light, Henryson's poem, so far from being a sequel to *Troilus and Criseyde* is not a love-story at all. It tells how Cresseid sins against God, how God punishes her, how through penance, suffering and contrition, she overcomes her sin of Pride and her sin of Ire and how eventually she returns to God. The thematic epicentre of the poem is Religion, not Love. The obvious parallel with Chaucer's great love-poem has made critics short-sighted and they have not thought it necessary to look beyond to any other of Chaucer's works. *Troilus and Criseyde* no doubt provides the groundwork on which the plot of Henryson's poem has been constructed but so far as the theme and Henryson's own aim are concerned, the real inspiration of *The Testament of Cresseid* is to be sought in the concluding section of *The Canterbury Tales*. Henryson's poem is, in fact, an *exemplum* on the Parson's sermon :

'For which seith Seint John Crisostum : 'Penitence  
destreyneth a man to accepte benygne every peyne that

hym is enioyned with contricioun of herte, and shrift  
of mouth, with satisfaccioun ; and in werkyng of alle  
manere humylitee' (The Parson's Tale l.108).

After his introductory remarks on Contrition and Penitence, the Parson goes on to discuss 'whiche been the seven deedly synnes, that is to seyn, chieftaynes of synnes.' He begins with *Superbia* (Pride) and enumerates its various branches. At least seven of these may be attributed to Cresseid—*Arrogance*, *Impudence*, *Contumacie*, *Insolence*, *Presumpcioun*, *Irreverence* and *Pertinacie*. In the *Remedium contra peccatum Superbie* he tells us how this sin may be overcome 'the remedie...is humylitee or mekeness . . The humilitee in herte is in foure maneres. That oon is whan a man holdeth hymself as noght worth biforn God of hevene. Another is whan he ne despiseth noon oother man. The thridde is whan he rekketh nat, though men holde hymn noght worth. The ferth is whan he nys nat sory of his humiliacioun' (11.475-478).

Equally applicable to Cresseid is his description of Anger 'Yet comen ther of Ire manye mo synnes, as wel in word as in thoght and in dede ; as he that arretteth upon God, or blameth God of thyng of which he is hymself guilty, or despiseth God and alle his halwes...Whan a man is sharply amonested in his shrifte thanne wole he be angry . and defenden or excusen hys synne by unstedfastness of his flessch...or elles it is his destinee.' (11.579-584).

Here, in effect, then we have the story of Cresseid. The deeply moving religious tone of the poem is Henryson's own original contribution to the legend. His *Morall Fabillis* also with there *moralitas* endings show the strongly moral bent of Henryson's mind. Though the tales are delightful in themselves the animated narration is always overshadowed by the serious conclusions and the immediate earthiness of the story placed against a background of heaven and hell. In this he differs from Chaucer. Chaucer is also concerned with ethics but his morality is more social than religious. This is evident in *The Canterbury Tales*. The conventional *Parson's Tale* apart, the *General Prologue* and the *Tales* primarily deal with man's relationship with his fellow-beings and, for Chaucer, more heinous than the Seven Deadly Sins is the sin of Hypocrisy.

The contrast is evident in the way the two poets treat the Chanticleer fable. Chaucer enlarges the canvas of his animal story to include the whole of mankind going as far back as Adam and Eve

Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo  
And made Adam fro Paradys to go (N.P.T.11.3257-58)



But apart from the one mock-epic simile that describes the confusion on the farm—'They yolliden as feendes doon in helle' (l. 3389) the scene remains firmly fixed on earth, and pride and flattery are abrogated for their this-worldly consequences. Chaucer introduces, it is true, an elaborate discussion on God's foreknowledge and man's free will but having done so, he deliberately retreats, declaring 'But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren, (1.3240). On the other hand Henryson at the end of *The Tail of Schir Chantecler and the Foxe* refers to 'flatterie and vaneglore' as 'twa sinnis' (1.612) and dwells on Satan's pride and everlasting punishment :

Fy, puft-up pryde ! Thow is full poysonabill !

Quha favoris the on force man haif ane fall ;

... ..

Tak witnes of the feyndis infernall,

Quhilk houndit down wes fra that hevinlie hall

To hellis hole, and to that hiddeous hous,

Because in pryde thay wer presumptuous. (11.513-599)

The direct concern with things temporal shows Chaucer to be in advance of his age, but his religion, as distinct from his morality, tends to be more conventionally medieval. He sharply criticises the degeneration of the clergy but he never actually questions the authority of the Church. He is a contemporary of Wycliff (1320-1384) but he nowhere says, with Wycliff, that the relationship of man to God is direct and requires no intermediary. His dependence on Church and priest is evident, by implication, in his writings and this explains why, when he does bring the *anagogical* level of existence into the picture as in *Troilus and Criseyde* he presents man as a passive creature rather than directly determining his own destiny,

The Lollard movement was suppressed by the end of the fourteenth century but it did not die. In 1407 an English Wycliffite named John Reseby had taken refuge in Scotland and he was not the only fugitive to escape thus. These Scottish Lollards secretly read the writings of Wycliff and nurtured the movement during the early years of the fifteenth century. Their influence was obviously not insignificant for in 1425 they attracted the attention of the Scottish Parliament which directed the Bishops to suppress them.<sup>8</sup>

How far Henryson was aware of this movement and how far he was influenced by it, we can only guess. Very little is known of Henryson's life. In an introductory note to the Latin version of Henryson's *Testament* (in a manuscript begun in 1639) Sir Francis Kinaston refers to 'one Mr.

Robert Henderson sometimes cheife schoole master in Dumfermling'. It is not improbable that he imbibed something of the Wyclifian spirit and so, in a sense, anticipated the Reformation. From his treatment of Cresseid's story it is clear that he regards man's relationship with God as direct and personal. Everyman of the Morality play had to be led to Confession and receive the last sacraments from the priest—in fact go through the entire *Via media* of the Church—before he was able to enter Heaven. The play, in effect, inculcates the sacramental teaching of the Catholic faith and glorifies priesthood; for Cresseid the journey to God is quite a different one.

One thing, however, Henryson's poem has in common with *Everyman*. In the morality play the whole of man's life has been reduced to one single dramatic moment, the most significant moment of all, the moment when man faces death and has to make his last reckoning on earth. Henryson's choice of title for his poem indicates that he also is focussing our entire attention on Cresseid's last act before her soul leaves her body. The will that Cresseid writes occupies only fifteen lines in the poem (11.577-591) and immediately after, almost in the very act of writing, she dies. One can think of so many alternative titles that Henryson might have given to the poem but, ignoring all the other events in the story, he has singled out these fifteen lines as the most momentous by giving to his poem the title *The Testament of Cresseid*. This fact alone is an indication of the religious tone of the poem; not only does the Testament throw her whole life into perspective, it is in and through this last farewell to earthly existence that Cresseid shows that she is now ready to enter the Life Everlasting.

Thomas à Kempis lived from 1380 to 1471. Although we know so little of Henryson's life, in all probability he lived towards the end of the fifteenth century and died *circa* 1505. Who knows if he had read *The Imitation of Christ* and if the words of à Kempis were in his mind as he brought the poem to a close: 'Always keep in mind your last end and how you will stand before the last Judge from whom nothing is hid... Therefore, live rightly now, and grieve for your sins, that in the Day of Judgement you may stand secure in the company of the Blessed' (Bk I ch. 24). Again, 'stand in awe of God's judgement and fear the anger of the Almighty God. Do not presume to investigate the ways of the Most High, but rather examine yourself, see how greatly you have sinned.' (Bk III ch. 4).<sup>9</sup> We do not know whether Henryson had access to *The Imitation of Christ* but can we doubt that certain words from *Ecclesiastes* echoed in his mind as he made Cresseid write her last Will and Testament: 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it' (12: 9)?

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8. See G. M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe* (Longman's Green and Co, 1899).
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# THE "FAUTLEST FREKE" : CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.

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JHARNA SANYAL

## I

A SUDDEN explosion of sound and colour fills the whole world of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the narration which began with a broad sweep, with reference to 'Troye' and Rome, abruptly closes down on a select court multitude in the midst of their feast and gaiety.

Nowel nayted onewe, neuened ful ofte ;  
And syþen riche forth, runnen to reche hondeselle,  
ʒeʒedʒeres-ʒiftes on hiz, ʒelde hem bi hond,  
Debated busyly aboute po giftes ;

(I. 65-68)

The merriment being over, the feast follows :

Alle þis mirþe þay maden to þe mete tyme ;  
When þay had waschen worþyly þay wenten to sete,  
þe best burne ay abof, as hit best semed. (I. 71-73)

The narrator has introduced a closed community which is the aristocratic coterie that sums up the quintessence of contemporary culture. The story may have been gleaned from the ancient lore telling of the 'turbulent times of King Arthur,' of which the poet professes to have heard, but the distance in time and space creates no barrier to developing that degree of involvement with the subject-matter which is necessary for its re-creation in literature. The poet reduces the distance to an advantageous minimum by contemporanizing the situation with cognizable details of mediaeval armour, dress, jewel, food hunting, architecture and such others, which give the story a typical mediaeval make-up.<sup>1</sup>

The world of the Romances is too confined for the folk who thronged the field described by Langland. His is the world of reality seen in concrete terms and weighed in the critical balance of practical moral judgement. The Romance-writers enliven the world of imagination in

contemporary terms and their task ends in the transliteration, in achieving the ancient world in terms of reality, in pictures of the then world. In both, the work of literature is one step further from life, either way. In Langland, it is from life to the criticism of life; in the Romance-poets, it is from the imaginative veracity to its realisation in terms of actuality, from shadow to substance. The Romances are the vintage tales of adventure and wonder hauled up with contemporary accessories and peopled with knights and ladies introduced with contemporary credentials in an unmistakably mediaeval society.

When at the feast the participants take their seats at the table, it is with 'þe best burne ay abof,' i.e. 'in authorized order, the high ranking first';<sup>3</sup> and the king is accompanied by "mony liflych lorde, ledez of the best/Rekenly of þe round table alle þo rich breþer" (I. 38-39). But here too, as has been pointed out, is an anachronism, for "in this description the company do not sit at the Round Table, but as in a hall of the author's own time;"<sup>3</sup> the Round Table was devised to avoid this kind of hierarchical order at the table. The knights, the chief adorners of Arthur's Round Table, represented all that was held best in mediaeval culture erected on the absolutes of universal ethical norm, reinforced by the doctrines of orthodox Christian morality, which formed the bedrock of life for all ages. They were segregated from the masses by being "conventionally thought to uphold all good order and virtue aganist the disorder threatening from outside"<sup>4</sup> and thereby necessarily opposed to the "chrulishness and all its vices" that "threaten from outside" to destroy the stability of society. Functionally, then they were the preservers of society with the king as their head, and it is in this capacity that they held a definite and therefore a static position in society as members of a class. The virtue of one knight was more or less identical with that of the other, and Chaucer's Knight had little difference from his compeers. Thus the individuality of the knight is not to be sought in his eccentricities or idiosyncrasies (which, if he had any, the poet thinks unnecessary to mention), but in the identification of the self with the group or the class of which he was an inseparable part. In mediaeval etymology, 'individual' would mean strongly enough, 'inseparable.' This connotation of the term was determined and characteristically so, by the theological argument trying to explain the nature of the Holy Trinity. "The effort," according to Raymond Williams, "was to explain how a being could be thought of as existing in his own nature yet existing by this nature as part of an indivisible whole."<sup>5</sup> By an extension of the concept in the social context it meant the "inseparable' part of the society. In the mediaeval scheme

a peasant was individualized as a peasant just as a knight, with the set attributes of "courteisie, noblesse, vertue and largesse" and the prescribed schedule of adventure, realised himself in terms of the properties which differentiate the various species. It is logically deduced that by virtue of the very fact that "a person was identical with his role in society, he was a peasant, an artisan, a knight, and not an individual who happened to have this or that occupation" (Erich Fromm). This individuality was, then, the membership of a class, to whose rules one was to conform, and it was this sense of conformity to the rules of the game, this feeling of community that instilled the awareness of the individual as one of the upholders of social stability, not as *the* upholder or *the* preserver.

It is this consciousness of the individual as a part of the community existence, of a unified group-entity, that makes Arthur comment when the Green Knight flings his challenge :

I know no gome þat is gast of þy grete wordes ; /Gif me now  
þy geserre, vpon Godez halue, /And I schal baypen þy bone  
þat þou bōden habbes. (l. 325-327)

Arthur herē assumes the role of 'the gouvernour of is gyng' (225), the representative speaking for the class, and in one of the preceding lines (253), Arthur chooses to introduce himself to the Green Knight in the following terms :

Wyze, welcum iwys to þis place,  
þe hede of þis ostel Arthour I hat ; (l. 252-253)

He is not King Arthur, but the head of the house, and the head implies the existence of the other organs which, though directed by the head, make up the complete existence, the organic whole. The relationship could not have been better expressed. It should also be noticed that the stranger throws his challenge not to Arthur or one particular knight, isolated from the others, but to any of the gathering of 'the worthiest the world has bred', whose fame has provoked him to put it to test. The silent court is baited with such words which once more reveal the same awareness on the part of the challenger. He does not address it to Arthur alone :

'What, is þis Arþures hous', Quoþ þe haþel þenne,  
'þat al þe rous rennes of þurȝ ryalmes so mony' ?  
Where is now *your* sourquydrye and *your* conquestes,  
Your gryndellayk and *y'our* greme, and *your* grete wordes ?

Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Round Table  
 Overwalt wyth a worde of *on wyzes speche*,  
 For al dares for drede withoute dynt schewed !. (I. 309-315)

It is addressed to a collective body which is opposed to the one man—on wyze, threatening to disturb the poise, secured and preserved by the collected effort of an organic unit. When Arthur takes up the challenge to preserve the honour, not of the individual, but of the Round Table, he does so not as the liege, but as the head of the group. By virtue of his very position in the social structure he cannot but accept the challenge, 'And I schal baypen þy þone þat þou boden habbes' (227). The 'I' thus is not so much the first person singular, it is to be seen as one of the inseparable parts of the third person plural 'we'.

When Gawain volunteers to be given the game, he duly excuses himself—

'Wolde ge, worþilych lorde', quof Wawan to þe Kyng,  
 Bid me boze fro þis benche, and stonde by yow þere,  
 þat I wythoute vylanye myzt voyde þis table  
 And þat my legge lady lyked not ille,  
 I wolde com to your counseyl bifore your cort ryche.  
 (I. 342-46)

Here once more is the implicit recognition of the pattern of a rigid society which binds the constituent parts with the chains of manners and customs which might have been devised as one of the...various means to curb the naturally selfish instincts of man, to trim the egocentric tendencies and make him co-operate with society "as a rational construction to restrain the forces threatening complete or at least partial annihilation". But these customs and manners had extended from mere strictures to the norms of the courtly life automatically assimilated by each of the members. With Gawain there is another obligation, besides that of membership, it is of kinship.

Fo me þink hit not semly, as hit is soþ knawen,  
 þer such an askyng is heuened so hyge in your sale,  
 þaz ge zoursel be talenttyf, to take hit to yourseluen,  
 Whil mony so bolde yow aboute vpon bench sytten,  
 þat vnder heuen I hope non hazer of wylle,  
 Ne better bodyes on bent þer baret is rered.  
 I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,

And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe—  
Bot for as much as ȝe ar myn em I am only to prayse,  
No bounté bot your blod I in my bodé knowe.  
And syben bis note is so nys bat noȝt his you falles,  
And I have frayed hit at yow fyrst, foldez hit to me ;  
(I. 348-54)

An analysis of the speech shows that Gawain's begging of the game is more in the nature of an obligation than a choice, because it is not 'seemly' that the king should volunteer when the worthy knights are present, and if it falls to the knights, Gawain should be the first claimant since he bears Arthur's blood. Rousseau later saw the community as the source of values, so it is to Gawain and his peers who not only imbibe those values but are also its trustees. This sense of trusteeship as a member of a class of society is reinforced by Gawain's personal bond to Arthur, his uncle, who in his turn seems to accept this bond as valid as he addresses him as 'Cosyn'.

## II

The poet, after having established the unnatural character of the tryst, gradually unfolds the character of the knight who is to meet his 'marvellous opponent'. In his virtues and attributes Gawain is one of the many knights of the age, whom the poet knew. If the Anglo-Saxon age upheld physical valour and fidelity to the lord as sacrosanct, it was with the implicit purpose of strengthening the pillars of a nebulous society threatened with invasion. The social necessities create certain values which are handed over to the individual and sometimes modify psychology. The individual thus becomes a product of social, historical and political forces which shape the contours of culture. Courtesy, courage, good faith, generosity, loyalty, moderation, bravery, chastity, all are qualities that emerge from a scheme of social and moral values accepted axiomatically. It is being a bit insensitive to believe that the poet "ostentatiously neglects to describe his hero exercising the conventional knightly virtue—courage"<sup>6</sup>—, since Gawain's trial is spiritual as well. The initial move, i.e. the acceptance of the unequal challenge cannot but speak of courage, the typical knightly virtue. The poet embarks conventions and known truths to reach far distant shores of significance.

So Gawain—in this specific role—is simply acting as a unit in the social organism, with the aid of the furnished physical and moral



accessories like courage and courtesy. In his acceptance of the challenge, in his journey towards his fatal destiny, in his further trysts, in his resistance to temptations, Gawain is an epitome of the medieval courtly virtues. If one is permitted to use the much-used term of the Existentialists, Gawain throughout exposes his 'unauthentic self' which is the outcome of his heredity, environment and society, and is therefore objective and typical.

This individual, then, as objective and typical, is predetermined by a certain society with a fixed culture-pattern, with little liberty of choice. Gawain had been entrusted with the adventure only when he claimed it to be his, but his seeming choice appears more to be a sort of obligation, since, as mentioned before, he is triply bound to his lord as a subject to the king, a servant to the head and a nephew to his uncle. If the first two obligations are in his blood, unconsciously admitted and accepted as the existence of that fluid in his body, Gawain is aware of the third—"I am only to prayse/No bounté bot your blod I in my bodé knowe." It is this, that determines his choice, which is more an illusion of a choice and actually a commitment to his king, to his kin and to his society; and he must earn his keep.

### III

An anticipation of the impending tragedy looms large over the feast which Arthur arranges in the honour of Gawain, in the parting words of his comrades and in the "watery tears that whelmed from weeping eyes". But Gawain shows a resigned acceptance for he feels himself "...boun to þe bur.." and this sense of submission is all the more pronounced in his consequent summing up of the human situation—"What may mon do bot fonde?" (665) This comment reveals the speaker's awareness of the individual's predicament in a world with which he is familiar and at the same time leads us to suspect that though society might have moulded the behaviour pattern for the so-called unauthentic self, the individual cannot always identify himself with society. Such identification on the part of Gawain would not have led to such a resigned generalization. This prospect presumes the existence of some area of experience and reaction which remains beyond the reach of such moulding forces like society or culture. The unauthentic self is not the complete version of the individual, who, as Jaspers points out, breaks through the crust only after some fundamental experience like suffering, guilt or death exposes the authentic side. The perfect knight who ignored death and

resisted flesh, yields to the temptation of a girdle. Adventures and temptations were a part of the world of the knight. These were the expected experiences to which the reaction also was set. But the Gawain-poet, in spite of apparently being so conventional, can afford lines where there is a regret for an 'adventure rashly taken', and omits descriptions of unnatural deeds so common to the genre. The last might be his "ironic critique on the lurid excesses of the genre of Romance<sup>7</sup>", but both are uncharacteristic of Romance literature. More 'un-romantic' is perhaps Gawain's unheroic feat of accepting the girdle. Here once more the poet, who, in pursuance of the generic canon, had built up a world full of snares and traps for the hero to detect and successfully overcome at the grand climax of the poem, makes the hero stumble over a trifle green girdle and sneakishly indulge in a breach of promise. The strong fortification built up by his five wits and other moral and spiritual virtues, endowed by society and such other factors, collapses at the slightest provocation. The threat of destruction, the gnawing fear of the unknown end, pull down the facade to reveal the true self, the man as a bare animal afraid of annihilation, the bare man craving for self-preservation, an instinct initiating the three-fold violation (of the knightly vows, of the deal regarding the exchange of the gifts, of his implicit allegiance to his host, which may be paralleled to the three-fold obligations initiating the acceptance of the game). No version of an individual, in whatever set-up and situation, can be more authentic. Gawain refuses to be an epitome of conventional virtues by unheroically succumbing to one of the primitive instincts common to his species. But he transcends the animal instinct by realising and then admitting "for care of py knokke cowardyse ne tazt.

To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake,  
þat is larges and lewte þat longez to knyztet.  
Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer  
Of trecherye and vntrawpe :'' (IV, 2379-83)

Gawain, it seems, "sees his sin in the orthodox manner enjoined by medieval penitential doctrine,"<sup>8</sup> and is absolved by confession and penance. This acknowledgement not only restores his moral and spiritual validity by virtue of which he is a member of a class, but also confirms him as the "fautlest freke þat euer on fote zede." The compliment does not estimate him as the perfection of all abstract virtues and values, but evaluates him with reference to those properties which may be found in men who tread on earth. The same practical evaluation in terms of applied values, as opposed to pure and therefore abstract, is again

discerned in another statement of the Green Knight : "þou forth þryngez/ Among prynces of prys." Gawain, if he stands supreme, does so only among 'prynces' honoured by society. So even in his triumph he is made to remain very much earth-bound, recognizable throughout in a realistic background.

#### IV

As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more,  
So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi ofer gay knyztez (IV, 2365)

Gawain has been paid the last and perhaps the best tribute by his 'enmy kene' who compares him to a pearl, not set in black velvet to shine all the more by contrast, but among white peas, among forms which appear like a pearl. The society, for the sake of its own stability maintains a semblance of homogeneous appearance, where the white pea and pearl deceive the eye, though the intrinsic difference, the difference of value and worth remains. This is the society which so much believes in uniformity, (however apparent it might be) emphasises the form (though there may be qualitative demarcations), and this social force as a great leveller would not allow Gawain to monopolise the girdle as a token of his shame and thereby alienate himself from the community which believes in joint enterprise. It would also be well to remember that Morgan la Fay had devised the game—

For to assay þe surquidre,' zif hit soth were  
þat rennes of þe grete renoun of þe Round table (2457),

and not for Gawain specifically. The girdle is therefore readily assimilated as a baldric which "vehe burne of þe broþerhede.....schuldi haue." and thus the individual, once more back within the social precincts, is engulfed by the common "unauthentic" social identity that smudges all "authentic" differences to people the world with appearances all alike.

This is the medieval world where the individual dwells securely fortified with known and ready values, as a member of a class with certain obligations to fulfil for social stability and consequently self preservation. Gawain is re-created in a medieval world, to act as a typical medieval knight with his steadfast allegiance to his vows and unquestioning acknowledgement of his social bondage. Yet behind the medieval armour hides the universal man who transcends the confines of the age by his human limitation.

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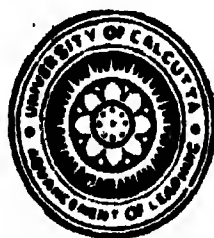
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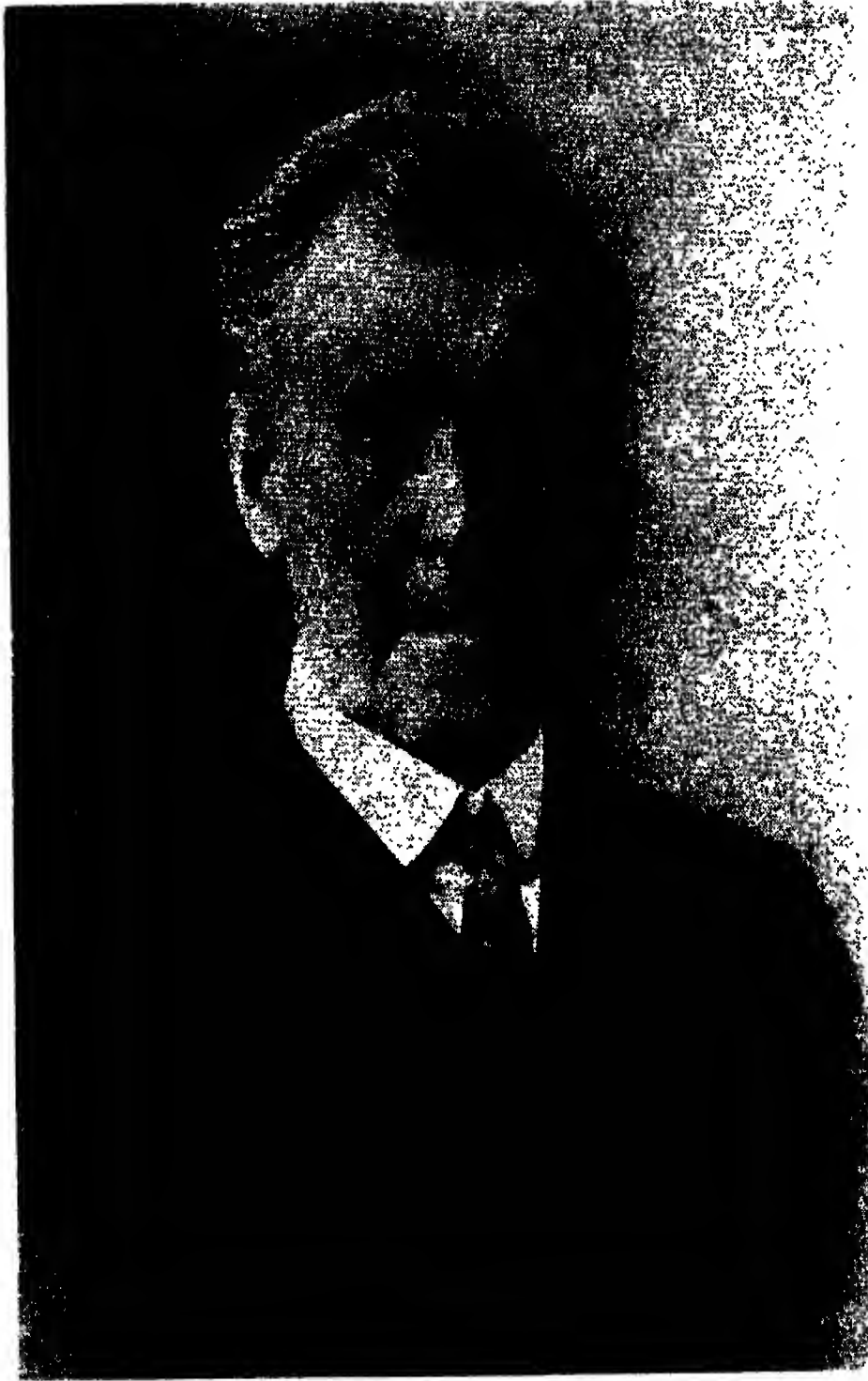
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**Prof. Henry Stephen, M.A., D.D. (Aberdeen) Ph.D. (Cal),**

**Born 1849**

**Died 1927**

**By courtesy of  
Scottish Church College.**



## IN MEMORIAM

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SUSHIL KUMAR MUKHERJEE

**PROFESSOR Henry Stephen** was born in 1849 in Lumsden, a bleak upland parish in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. In the Parish school his teacher was James Tindal who had taught a number of distinguished students. He graduated in 1870 from Aberdeen University with Honours in Classical Literature and Mental Philosophy. He then took his course in Divinity in the Free Church Theological College in Aberdeen. He went to Germany for further studies. Returning to Scotland he took up teaching.

Henry Stephen came to India in January 1882 when he joined the staff of the Free Church Institution at Nimtola Ghat Street in North Calcutta (the present Jorabagan Thana building). Free Church Institution was then a rival to Duff College, founded by the Rev. Alexander Duff which was originally called The General Assembly's Institution. When the two colleges united in 1908 to become the Scottish Churches College (now Scottish Church College) Henry Stephen continued as teacher of English and Philosophy. Here he taught till his retirement in 1913. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee invited Professor Stephen to join the University Department of English. In 1914 Professor Stephen joined the Post-Graduate Department and taught till 1927. He became the Head of the Department in 1919, after Professor Robert Knox. In 1921 the University of Calcutta conferred upon him the distinction of Doctor of Philosophy. Earlier, in 1914, Aberdeen University had made him Doctor of Theology.

Dr Stephen died on September 1, 1927 in a Nursing Home in Calcutta, at Elysium Row. He was 78.

By virtue of his outstanding qualities as a teacher and as a man, his prodigious learning and saintly character, Dr Henry Stephen has become a legendary name in the academic world. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of his death, this volume of the journal of the English Department is dedicated to his sacred memory.

## HENRY STEPHEN

---

JAMES WATT

A CALCUTTA newspaper writing of Dr Henry Stephen stated that his kingdom lay north of Cornwallis Square, that south of that he was little known. It must have somewhat astonished the writer to read of the act of respect towards this little known man when the Corporation of Calcutta stood for a few seconds to mark their appreciation of his services to education in Bengal. His pupils are scattered over the whole of India, they are to be found everywhere in Bengal, and their affection for and reverence towards him are well known to his closer friends.

His shy, reserved manner made it difficult to learn much of his earlier years. One would have liked to know what sort of school-master they had in that upland sparsely peopled parish on Donside in Aberdeenshire who could so well prepare his pupils for the University....Henry Stephen graduated from Aberdeen University in 1870 with double Honours—in Classical Literature and Mental Philosophy. He took his course in Divinity in the Free Church Theological College in Aberdeen, but, so far as is known, did not go forward to license. Thereafter he studied in Germany and for a time was engaged in teaching in Scotland.

Mr George Smith, Secretary, F. M. C. used to claim that it was he that prevailed on Mr Stephen to go to India and in January 1882 he joined the Staff of the Free Church Institution, Nimtola Ghat Street, and found himself in work to which he could give himself with heart and soul. He continued his work in Philosophy and English in the united college—Scottish Churches College—until 1913 when he joined the Staff in the University Post-Graduate Classes in English. He continued in this work until the end of the last session when he was laid aside by sickness.

He was happy in his College classes and in the old strenuous days in the Free Church Institution, when ways and means had to be most carefully husbanded, he often taught hour after hour throughout the

day. And to that he added extra hours for backward or for brilliant students in the mornings and evenings. His method of teaching was peculiar. The high-pitched voice, repeating and re-repeating clause by clause, sentence by sentence, the continuous movement on the platform as he added every now and then the heads of his lecture on the black-board, his patience and the unwearied toil which he willingly incurred in helping his students at every stage, left their mark on them in a notable fashion. Other methods of teaching may tend to develop the ablest students in a more effective fashion, but the ordinary student understood him and believed that no other teacher came within sight of him. If they failed to pass, they held that the fault lay with the University for they had answered the questions according to Stephen and that was enough.

He had studied Botany and Zoology and not only used these subjects freely in illustration in his own subjects but directed the studies of private students in them. He had an eager interest in Astronomy and one might often find him late at night with his telescope on the roof of the College. His interest in physical knowledge seemed to stop short of electricity and of chemistry, but it was always dangerous to assume ignorance of department of knowledge because of his silence.

He did not take part in the regular Scripture teaching in the College except when the Staff was very short, or on special occasions, but most of us were accustomed to hear from students and former students that he was the best Christian missionary among us.

He recognised very early that the administrative work in a College was not his work and he returned to his many classes without regret.

His own University of Aberdeen in recognition of his work in India conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity and in 1921 the Calcutta University conferred the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His many students, up and down northern India, will ever think of him with affection and not a few of them with gratitude as they recall the gifts, so unobtrusively given, which made higher education possible for them. In the best sense they sat at his feet, they learned from his words and admired his patient unselfish character.

It was thoroughly characteristic of the man that no persuasion



even by his own students could secure his presence in a class-group and the result is that only two photographs of his tall, somewhat unusual figure can be found. He enjoyed extra-ordinarily good health throughout his long residence in Calcutta and the simple Spartan habits which he had learned in his childhood he never gave up. He passed away in a nursing home on the evening of 1st September at the age of 79 years and his friends said farewell on Friday morning in the Scottish cemetery to the silent, somewhat lonely man whom they had known for years and had loved.

## DR STEPHEN

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ADITYANATH MOOKHERJEE

I FIRST came to know Dr Stephen in 1892 when I joined the First Year Class of the Duff College...Dr Stephen...took upon himself, in addition to his own duties as Acting Principal and Professor of English and Philosophy, the greater part of the work of two teachers (on furlough). He was in sole charge of B. A. Philosophy, Pass and Honours. The teaching of English, Pass and Honours Courses, also largely fell to his share. Those who had the good fortune of attending his lectures on the dramas of Shakespeare will readily recall how he enabled them to enter into the mind of the poet and appreciate and enjoy his genius.

...In the First Year we read with him Scott's *Rokeby*...He had all the qualities which constitute a really great scholar and a successful teacher : he could most easily bend to the level of his class. In his explanation of the text he chose the simplest expressions and when he dictated notes, he wrote them—as he invariably did except in the case of his M. A. classes—on the blackboard. A great linguist and a rich classical scholar, his notes specially excelled in the philological element. When we first began to study Philology in the Third Year (English Honours Course) we found that Dr Stephen had already made us fairly familiar in the First Year stage with the essentials of the subject.

As Professor of Philosophy Dr Stephen felt the difficulty and inconvenience of being required to lecture on certain prescribed text-books, not exactly suited to the needs and capacity of his classes. There were difficulties of language and difficulties of ideas. Syllabuses comprising the fundamental topics of a subject were unknown in those days. But Dr Stephen solved the difficulties in a way which is only possible to one whose knowledge of the subject is at least equal to that of the author whose views are being explained. He would rearrange the topics of the text-book in his own way and express them in his own way too, avoiding, as far as accuracy would permit,

all technical expressions and enriching his notes with his own illustrations and analogies which were most happily chosen and which made the meaning plain even to the dullest intellect. But the most stimulating, and to certain students most valuable, feature of his notes was their suggestiveness ; after completing his explanation of the views of an author or his exposition of a philosophical doctrine, he would add a few critical queries on their accuracy and soundness, leading the student to think for himself and form his own conclusion. To help the student he would refer to parallel views or to opposite views, and show by a brief but acute analysis, that a superficially identical view was really opposed to, and that an apparently opposite view when reduced to its simplest terms was really identical with, the view expounded in the notes. These profoundly suggestive queries and criticisms he would direct to be enclosed in square brackets so that the continuity of his exposition might not be disturbed. These notes which were composed extempore, while faithfully analysing, simplifying and summarising the contents of a text-book, were in a sense independent and original treatises taking the students much further into the heart of the subject by ways perfectly smooth and pleasant.

Latterly he threw a portion of these lecture-notes into a more systematic form, and the result was a number of standard works in Philosophy unsurpassed as regards the mode of presentation of philosophical problems and the soundness of their treatment. The *Principles of Psychology*, the *Principles of Ethics*, the *Principles of Logic*, and the *Problems of Metaphysics* have removed the obstacles to the study of a highly abstruse subject which discourage and repel the beginner. The result of very long teaching experience in one of the biggest Colleges in India, these books are pre-eminently adapted to the requirements of Indian students. The very prolixity of the style and the treatment was deliberately adopted by the author. His opinion was that if the same thing be repeated several times in different words, the repetition would not only help in impressing upon the mind of the student clear and definite ideas about a subject which abounds in vague and abstract generalisations but by supplying him with an abundant vocabulary would dispense with the necessity of cram.

Dr Stephen conducted his M. A. classes in Philosophy three days in the week in the morning from seven to half-past eight in 2, Corn-

wallis Square. I have mentioned the details of his College timetable to show Dr Stephen's enormous capacity for work. If the prescribed texts were common to two classes and the classes were small—as were the B. A. Honours and the M. A. classes—he joined them. Two graduates of the College were employed to dictate his notes written by him overnight, so that when he was lecturing to one class, he was also lecturing vicariously to two other classes. That was the way in which he managed to carry on the work of the College till the full strength of the staff was restored by the arrival of Dr Hector and Mr Telfer after the Puja vacation.

The relaxation which he sought from this heavy strain was in keeping with his scholarly habits. It did not consist in absolute rest but in change of occupation. Though not a book-worm his appetite for reading was insatiable. He had a fine collection of books which were mostly foreign classics—Greek, Latin, Hebrew, German, French, Italian, Spanish and the like. He was a true lover of books....There was not a single book in his big library that he had not carefully read. Any one taking down a book from a shelf would have noticed that passages here and there were marked by two thin parallel strokes in the margin. Most of his readings he did in the artificial light of the lamp, and this latterly affected his eye-sight.

Another form of recreation was derived from the microscope and the telescope. His knowledge of Botany and Astronomy was that of a specialist in these subjects. Several students of the Duff College took their Master's Degree in Botany under the pilotage of Dr Stephen...He had a passion for studying the stars. After sunset he would plant and adjust his telescope on the terrace and watch the movements of heavenly bodies, sometimes for the most part of a night. Occasionally he would invite his students to his house and explain to them the marvels of Astronomy...

Dr Stephen took plenty of physical exercise. When lecturing he walked up and down in the open space in front of his class. He would every now and then straighten up his body and bend it slightly backwards to counteract the tendency towards stooping and the bowed shoulders so characteristic of the confirmed bookworm. In the early days of cycling he kept a tricycle on which he rambled about in the northern suburbs of the town, the fine gardens belonging to the Jain temples at Ultadingi being one of his favourite resorts. With the

introduction of the safety bicycle he became an enthusiastic cyclist. He gave up cycling some twenty years ago when he met with a rather serious accident in Dhurumtola Street opposite the Chandney Chawk.

... He was persuaded by the late Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, to join the Post-Graduate Staff as Professor of English. For reasons of health he had to sever his connection with the University last May. The resolution of the Senate and the speech of the present Vice-Chancellor show grateful appreciation of his splendid services to the Post-Graduate Department. His last work written a few months before he passed away was a substantial volume on *Poetics*. And to the Vice-Chancellor who went to see him when he was lying ill in the Presidency General Hospital, his request was that every college teacher of English might be presented with a copy of that work.

His love for his pupils was genuine and deep, and his pupils regarded him with feelings of deepest reverence and affection. A request from students he could hardly refuse... Every session he paid the college fees of several poor students, sometimes he would buy them their text-books, and on one occasion he gave four hundred rupees to one of his ex-students to help him to rebuild his thatched house which had been burnt down... But assistance in every case was given with utmost secrecy, and the manner of rendering it never hurt the feelings of the recipients.

Dr Stephen possessed another quality very rare among Europeans living in India... He was quite unconscious of the distinction between a black skin and a white one... He was likewise entirely and absolutely free from any kind of religious bigotry and aggressiveness which is inseparable from intellectual shallowness. His culture was as wide as it was deep, and the outcome of such a culture dissolved all dogmatism and created in him a genuine spirit of toleration... He was perfectly free from partiality in his treatment of Christians and non-Christians. In his dealings with his fellow human beings, in his appreciation of the schools of thought, Indian and European, he was not in the least influenced by differences of caste and creed. Such elasticity of the understanding, such uncompromising fidelity to truth, such urbanity of temperament, have always been the marks of great minds. This explains why this teacher from remote Scotland easily won for himself a much nearer

and more secure place in the hearts of his students than many teachers of their own race and creed.

Another feature of Dr Stephen's nature was that though he lived in the closest touch with his students and colleagues, he also lived an inward life of his own, isolated and insulated, to which it was difficult to get access....He noticed everything about him with a most observant eye but like those who know most and say least he would never say anything about his personal views beyond what was demanded by common courtesies and conventionalities. His reticence was invincible and impenetrable. He had in him a very strong dash of the Stoic sage ; stoicism in the noblest sense of the term entered largely into the composition of his personality. In his farewell speech to the students of his College, his advice to them was summed up in two short sentences : "Do your duty". "Fear no man"...He was a philosopher who not only loved Philosophy but lived it. His own life—simple and beautiful, deeply inward but also outward and heavenward, wrapped in his own contemplation but at the same time lovingly consecrated to the service of others—suggests and illustrates the trend of his own practical philosophy.

His own philosophical views he never pushed forward or thrust upon any one. If directly asked as to his personal views on any philosophical problem he would begin very modestly with one theory and pile upon it other theories of every shade of differences, whether of agreement or of opposition, explaining and criticising each theory as he proceeded and leaving the questioner to form his own conclusion on the subject. The personal element he carefully effaced... He was very fond of the works of Carlyle and Coleridge. He was profoundly impressed by the poetry of Wordsworth. He thought that Wordsworth was "the first British thinker who, without being taught by any one, gave expression to the idealistic movement of the nineteenth century."

Many have thought that by coming out to India Dr Stephen sacrificed his career as a thinker of world-wide reputation. I too was of this opinion. But as I came to know him more and more, I had to alter it. He always avoided publicity. His repugnance to the limelight was a deep-seated characteristic of his nature which was composed of the finest and most delicate qualities. His exquisitely sensitive nature found peace and repose in solitude...

... I, therefore, doubt if he would have emerged out of the comparative obscurity in which he buried himself in India even if he had remained in Europe. It is doubtful if any 'kindly coercion' would have succeeded in drawing him out of himself. His reticence, his modesty, and his standard of perfection were obstacles in the way which no kindly coercion could have overcome. From this it must not be supposed that he had in him a certain obstinacy or "dourness."..On the contrary his was a most genial personality, full of that genuine kindness and mellowness which can only come from deep reflection on life—its meaning and its problems.

Dr Stephen blended in him the saint and the savant. His love of seclusion remained with him to the end. Up to the very last moment he was anxious that the news of his illness might not spread. For nearly five months he endured, with perfect resignation and cheerfulness, the sufferings inflicted by the fatal disease...And when he passed away, not one of his many thousand pupils and ex-pupils were permitted by fate to pay the tribute of their love and reverence for their dear Master by following his remains to their final resting place. Perhaps it was as well as this was so ; such privacy was quite in keeping with that love of seclusion and self-effacement which characterised his whole life. He loved the people of Bengal and with them he left his bones.

**Professor HENRY STEPHEN**  
**—As I Remember**

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**RAGHABENDRA NATH BANERJEE**

IN PAYING my respectful homage to Professor Henry Stephen, my teacher in Scottish Churches College (1911-13), I recall here a few incidents still vivid in my recollection. Professor Stephen was a saintly teacher who was held in great reverence by all who came near him for his charming personality and love for students.

Professor Stephen lived in a big room on the first floor of the College. He led a very simple life, but exercised tremendous influence on his students with his kind and gentle manners and a heavenly smile.

When I was a student I told my father about the saintly character of our professor of Philosophy, how he used to feed the flying birds, including crows, with crumbs of bread when they perched on his body as he sat on the open terrace in front of his room. My father, Rai Gopal Ch. Banerjee Bahadur, a distinguished judge, was an orthodox Hindu and a firm believer in the Hindu Shastras. He was so impressed to hear the virtues of Professor Stephen that he wanted to meet him one day. So I arranged an interview. My father took some flowers with him which, after his talks, he placed at the feet of my professor as a mark of reverence, much to the latter's surprise and embarrassment. Before Professor Stephen could speak anything, my father told him that he had conquered all human passions and had raised himself to such a spiritual height that birds and beasts came near him without fear. He had, therefore, shown his reverence for a saint in the usual Hindu tradition.

In 1913 there was a social function to be held at the Dundas Hostel in which Professor Stephen was to be the Chief Guest. The students who loved him very much, had planned, without his knowledge, to take him to the function in a carriage drawn by themselves. My eldest brother, late Dr J. N. Banerjee, a renowned doctor of the time, had an ivory-white carriage which I arranged for this



purpose. At the appointed time on the day of the function, many students had assembled in front of the College gate. Professor Stephen who wanted to walk the short distance was persuaded to sit inside the carriage. When he did so the horses were removed and the students started pulling the carriage. Taken by surprise, Professor Stephen attempted to jump out, but was prevented. The students told him, that they only wanted to show their love and respect for their teacher in this way. As far as I remember, the leading part in this affair was taken by Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Nirmal Kumar Siddhanta, Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee, Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee, Priyanath Sen, and myself. All my friends who later became eminent in their respective spheres, are gone. The only survivors are Priyanath Sen, Barrister-at-Law, and myself.

I remember another incident. Professor Stephen was Head Examiner in one of our examinations, in 1913. Some students managed to enter his room in his absence, just to see, if possible, the marks obtained by them. But Professor Stephen appeared all on a sudden and enquired what they were doing in his room in his absence. The students felt very small and could not give any satisfactory explanation. The few words that the professor spoke on the occasion brought tears to the eyes of his students who left the room quietly, promising that they would never do such a thing again.

Professor Stephen was the President of the Dramatic Union of the College. He expressed great appreciation of the performance of "Othello" by the students in the College Hall, in 1912, and wrote a report in the Magazine giving high praise to the performers. He was so pleased with my rendering of the role of Othello that when I approached him for a certificate after I left the College, he made a special mention of my excellence in English, which, however, was far from truth. It was his immense love for his students that prompted him to exaggerate the merit of his students for their future benefit in the field of employment. Modest in all things, he was lavish in his praise for his students.

Professor Stephen's habits were remarkably simple. He never cared for his dress, though he was neat and clean. He never combed his hair. But his students maintained perfect silence in his class. Professor Stephen avoided publicity. He never allowed his photo to be taken. He used to say that it would only spoil the camera.

## A PROFESSOR'S PROFILE

—Reminiscences of an old student.

ANIMESH CHANDRA RAY CHOUDHURY

A TALL wiry person with tousled hair in a frayed and faded suit was standing on the tram track in front of the old book stalls on College Street, just outside the Presidency College campus, which were his favourite haunt and hunting ground after college hours. Recognising him at once from a short distance as Professor Stephen of the Post-graduate Department of English which I had joined a few days before, in 1917, after passing out of the Scottish Churches College, and espying a tram car fast coming on towards him, I cried, "Please move off the line, Sir ; there's a tram car coming." He was intently poring over a book which I had every reason to believe he must have picked up from one of the book stalls nearby. Waking up as if from a reverie, he asked me, "Where am I, Mister ?" (Incidentally, I might say that Dr Stephen had the peculiar habit, or rather idiosyncrasy, of repeating "Mr" several times in course of conversation with his pupils). "Sir", I said, "you're standing right on the tram-line and there's a tram car coming on". "Where are you going, Mr ?", he asked me. "Sir, I'm going to Dalhousie Square". "I'm also going to Dalhousie Square", he said. Dr Stephen was then living in Spence's Hotel, off Dalhousie Square.

We boarded the same first class compartment in the tram car which was filled to its utmost capacity mostly by students from colleges in North and Central-Calcutta. Many of them stood up out of respect to Dr Stephen who was a familiar figure in College Square in those days. But Dr Stephen could by no means be persuaded to occupy any of the many vacant seats offered to him. When I earnestly requested him to occupy one of the seats, he repeated several times, "How can I sit down, Mr, while you're standing, Mr ?" The car moved on to Dalhousie with most of the student passengers standing, out of respect for a revered professor. It was indeed a sight to see !

This was my first introduction to Dr Stephen. He took me to his flat in Spence's Hotel, and cordially invited me to repeat my visit whenever I had any difficulty. I had had occasional glimpses of Dr Stephen during my I. A. studies in the Scottish Churches College (1913-15) when he was Professor of Philosophy there, before joining the Post-graduate Department of the Calcutta University. During my post-graduate studies, I remember the then Vice-Chancellor, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee making a remark that Dr Stephen was by far the most learned and versatile European scholar-philosopher he had come across during his long association with the Calcutta University. Coming out to India to join the Free Church Institution, he became Head of the Department of Philosophy in the united College, named Scottish Churches College. I remember how during our Pass Course studies in Philosophy in the Scottish Churches College, the late Dr Urquhart strongly recommended Dr Stephen's three books on Philosophy,—Ethics, Metaphysics and Psychology as *vādè-mècum* for every student.

A few days after my first encounter with Dr Stephen, I received a letter from Professor William Douglas who had taught us English in the I. A. and B. A. classes for three years, before joining the newly-founded University of Rangoon as Head of the Departments of English and Philosophy. Professor Douglas had a soft corner for me in his heart. The letter I received enclosed another letter of introduction to Dr Stephen, strongly recommending me for a free-studentship during my post-graduate studies in the Calcutta University and requesting the learned Professor to help me in case of any difficulty. I remember how Dr Stephen secured for me a free-studentship by putting in a good word for me to Sir Asutosh.

Dr Stephen had the peculiar habit (that was also an idiosyncrasy for a Post-graduate Professor) of writing with a piece of chalk on a blackboard notes on difficult words and sentences in the text books he used to teach us. We often wondered why he treated us as undergraduate students who had just joined College. Perhaps he felt that those notes would be helpful for all students, good, bad or indifferent, who were intent on passing their examinations. As it is well-known, the majority of students are content with mere pass marks and only a small minority aspire for honours or distinction marks. Dr Stephen's certificates, given to even brilliant boys after they

passed their M.A. Examination, invariably carried a sentence which said, "He could follow teaching in English with profit".

One incident, out of many of my personal meetings with the learned Professor, will always remain in my memory. Once after college hours, I went to the University Library in search of some new books on Romantic Poetry. I had just picked up one and was deeply absorbed in reading Blake's Poem—*To The Muses*. I heard somebody behind my back reciting the poem with such gusto that I was compelled to look behind and see who it was. It was none other than Dr Stephen, who after finishing a recital of the entire poem from memory, told me how pleased he was to see me reading Blake who was a precursor of Shelley and the transcendentalists. Dr Stephen did not seem to care for anything that went round him. He had a look of other-worldliness, the true look of a philosopher, a total unconcern for mundane things. What charmed me and most of my contemporaries, was his child-like simplicity, unconventionality, spirit of dedication to the service of his students and the cause of the advancement of learning in our country. If he was great as a scholar and philosopher, he was still greater as a man. His heart overflowed with the milk of human kindness, particularly for his students whom he loved and served so sincerely and conscientiously for more than three decades. Dr Stephen was a life-long bachelor whose innumerable anonymous acts of charity were known only to those who had the privilege of coming in close contact with him.

He has left behind him no worldly riches but the imperishable legacy of noble thoughts, words and deeds, of teachings and writings which once inspired and should still continue to inspire generations of students.

*IN MEMORY OF*  
THE LATE PROFESSOR HENRY STEPHEN, D.D.

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JANAKINATH BANERJEE

DR Henry Stephen was known as a learned professor in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the earlier ones of the twentieth. That is how his memory is honoured. But not much is said or known about the saintly nature of his life and character. I give here my impressions about him from what I knew of him, as his student and also in later days.

Quiet, unassuming and self-effacing by nature, he carved out for himself his own "sequestered vale of life" amidst the bustle and din of city life. It was a higher atmosphere of serenity, learning, charity, compassion and loving kindness in which he lived and moved.

He had no family, no friends, no admirers to greet him in his lonely room at Spence's Hotel.

Speeches or orations he made none, wrote no magazine articles nor drew any admiring crowd. Fame and honour he counted as dust.

He cared little, it seemed, for what was happening around him. His sole concern appeared to have been his studies and the teaching of boys in his charge.

He became Head of the Department of English in the P.G. department of the University of Calcutta and had his room in Darbhanga Buildings where one could see him easily. In classroom he did not lecture or dictate notes, lest he should be misunderstood by any. Tall and comely but aging, with a duster in his left hand and a chalk pencil in the right, he mounted the dais and wrote down on the blackboard his notes which the boys copied. A collection of his lecture notes was later published by the University of Calcutta. I had a copy of this and read it with solace in leisure hours in after life. I am reminded in this connection of the late Professor Scrimgeour of the Scottish Churches College who also used to write down his valuable notes on the blackboard for boys to copy.

His learning was great—almost encyclopaedic—in literature, philosophy, etc. He wrote two books, one on Psychology and the other on Metaphysics, which I remember to have read in my undergraduate classes. He was an adornment to the Post-Graduate department, like Professor C. V. Raman, Professor S. Radhakrishnan and others.

If kind hearts are more than coronets, he was greater than kings. He was not a rich man, being only a salaried professor who had to pay bills for living in a European hotel and for buying books that he loved and needed most. Yet he scraped whatever he could to help the needy and the poor.

With bits of small coins in his pocket he would leave his residence in hotel before sunset and stroll out into the streets till he reached the maidan area where the football playing grounds are, facing the southern gate of the Government House. Another visitor to the area was Principal Girish Chandra Bose of Bangabasi College. He came for his evening constitutionals in a small carriage drawn by ponies and alighted at the northern end of the Red Road. With a stout stick in his hand, he walked rather briskly along the gravel path which was just outside the western boundary of the Red Road and terminated at the northern gate of Fort William. Dr Stephen was to be seen in this area but not in any fixed place or route. His walks were more like rambles which seemed to have no definite direction or destination, slow-moving and stopping at places or things that excited his curiosity, with his felt hat on and a stick hanging from his left arm. Beggar boys knew their "Sahib" who distributed the small bits of coin which he usually carried in his pockets for giving alms to the poor. The boys went away happy, 'salaming' him when they got their usual alms, Dr Stephen looking on smilingly.

"Yes, Mister", were the words ready on his lips to greet all those who approached him, and he was accessible to all. I once happened to need a certificate from him and he readily gave it. The wooden stairs of the Darbhanga Buildings, at one time, were in a bad way and needed early repair. An Audit Officer of the University, the late S. N. Bose, had to write in this regard an item for the agenda of a Syndicate meeting. Dr Stephen, then old and retired, happened to be passing at the time along the corridor in front of his room. Mr Bose went up straight to the Professor and asked him if he

could use the word “edging”—edging the steps—with plates of brass or steel. “What do you say, Mr ? Edging, edging the steps ?” he asked. “Oh, yes, it’s quite right, quite right. You can use it.” His sympathetic and obliging hand was open to all.

Pretensions to piety or spirituality he had none. My idea is that his heart was given to God, as his hands were given to fellowmen, and this sustained him in his loneliness. In my long life I have seen few men as saintly as he was. In this rude world he grew up like a blossoming flower spreading fragrance all around, and had in due time, his final repose in the lap of God.

He is in Heaven and I bow with reverence to his sacred memory.

## PROFESSOR HENRY STEPHEN : A TRIBUTE

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GOPAL HALDAR

I DO not presume to speak of the present, but in our days ( 1922-24 ) the University teachers of English were well-known scholars.

Professor Henry Stephen was the Head of the Department. A saintly man, he was then old. Due to age he retired from his old College where he had established his reputation as a Professor of Philosophy and was due to return home. At his farewell meeting Sir Asutosh Mukherjee was present and he persuaded the old professor to teach in the University. Professor Stephen had to agree, but he would not teach Philosophy and Sir Asutosh accepted him as a Professor of English.

When we were his students, the old professor visibly showed in his gait and general appearance some infirmities, but not in mind. He came regularly to his classes and taught his students in his own way and set apart a part of his salary as stipends for needy and worthy students. A few years later he died here.

When we knew him, he was still a well-built figure, a bit careless about his dress, but his eyes were failing, though there was still a gleam of affection in them. He was simple, dignified and calm, though a bit hesitant. He rarely spoke in his classes and wrote his day's lecture on the black-board with the help of a big magnifying glass. His handwriting was firm, bold and quite good. Occasionally, he gave advice, "Do not read books on books", "This is good", "This is bad."

His manner of teaching was direct and simple. The content only mattered. We studied with him the literature of the Romantic Revival, 1798 to 1832.

Only later we came to know how much the manner and content of his notes were due to his powers of simplification and clear exposition.



His slim volume on *Poetics* published in our day, by the Calcutta University, abundantly confirmed his reputation. In clearness, simplicity and lucidity, it was a treat in the interpretation of the Revival Period.

Perhaps from his long acquaintance with students, he gained the impression that literature is not all sound or smoke, froth or foam and it was necessary to make his students here appreciate this aspect.

To sum up, Professor Henry Stephen was not one who startled but who really enlightened his students.

## PROFESSOR HENRY STEPHEN

—a Savant with a difference

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RABINDRA NATH BOSE

THIS title may arouse some arguments and perhaps more questions. Our venerable Professor, had he been alive, would himself, most likely, have objected to it. As only a little is remembered, and as still less is known about his life, the appellation must be justified to those who never knew him. But there are still a few of the older generation to whom Professor Henry Stephen is well-known not only as a renowned teacher but also as a well-beloved figure in the academic world of Calcutta, first from 1882 to 1913, when he served as a teacher in the Free Church Institution, Duff College, and later the Scottish Churches College, and then from 1914 to 1927 when he taught in the Calcutta University.

He was "the grand old man of the University who taught three generations of students". This was the apt description of Dr Stephen by the then Vice-Chancellor, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, while introducing him to the members of the Sadler Commission.

In September 1914 Professor Stephen was appointed the University Professor of English. A contemporary Daily wrote, 'It is understood that the University has secured the services of Professor Stephen who is going home just now but will be coming back in a couple of months to take up his new appointment as the University Professor of English. This is a welcome news to all well-wishers of the University, to numerous admirers of Mr Stephen who know that there will not be another Mr Stephen.' (Bengalee, Sept 25, 1913)

As a born teacher whose vocation in life was teaching, Professor Stephen accepted the job. We find in a note of September 1911 that he had been elected to the C. U. Syndicate in place of Mr Percival (resigned), and then in 1914 he was appointed a University Professor in English. So his connection with the University was a continuation of his existing link with it.

At his farewell meeting in the Scottish Churches College on September 18, 1913, speakers who paid tribute to him included Sir Gurudas Banerjee, Dr D. P. Sarvadhikary, Professor J. R. Banerjee, Professor A.N. Mukherjee and his student Dr Haridas Bhattacharya.

It must be mentioned that his great reputation was made in his old college as a Professor of Philosophy, though whatever he taught, Mathematics or Physics, indicated that he had the gift of clear exposition in an uncommon degree.

When I came to the M. A. class as his student (1922-24), the renowned Professor, who was already a legend, was fast losing his eye-sight, and his attraction as a teacher was fading. His gait indicated the weight of years and his spoken words were few and almost inaudible. He was a bit careless in his dress. Some of us could not then quite appreciate why he wrote on the black-boards with the help of his magnifying glass. But later we understood that his notes were meant to reach the least sophisticated among his students. Teaching Ruskin's *Unto This Last* he gave of his best in objective analysis, in words clear and lucid, whose simplicity was obvious, but whose profundity was noted only by the discerning few. Only in our maturity we could recognise what Max Muller stated — 'Scholars come and go and are forgotten ; but the road they have opened remains.'

In our days by writing his *A Syllabus of Poetics* he proved his command over a different branch of study.

I am not competent to elaborate on this topic. I would rather try to give some idea of the man as I knew him.

His innate modesty and reserve prevented him from disclosing any details of his family and bio-data. I knew that he lived very simply at the Spence's Hotel where his students had free access. I knew that to the outsider he was known for his eccentric ways as these were more easily seen than the inner strength in his mind and spirit. In fact, in his later days, he moved more and more in the domain of the mind. His absent-mindedness, forgetfulness of the names of his pupils, and aloofness, increased with advancing years. It was hard to believe that in his earlier years, he was not only the President of the Philosophical Society in the Scottish Churches College, but also the founder of the Dramatic Union. Even when we knew him, there was an element of the unexpected in him. Though he nodded as an

aged man, he would smile at times like a child. The ironies of life never weighed him down nor extinguished the courage and nobility of his soul, of which a few instances I give below. Two incidents have been narrated by the renowned revolutionary Dr Jadugopal Mookherjee in his reminiscences, *Biplabir Smritikatha*.

According to Dr Mukherjee, Professor Stephen who is called saint-like, protected his students who were about to be arrested for shouting *Bande Mataram* in the College. And when a Christian teacher slapped a student, he not only reprimanded the teacher but suspended him for 15 days.

Professor Rangin Halдар informed me that when a gold watch and chain, evidently the Professor's heirloom, was stolen and his servant was caught red-handed, he blamed not the thief but himself for his ostentatious display which tempted a poor man.

I would like to end on a personal note. In the University he was given Rs. 1000/- per month as pay, but he took only Rs. 750/- and set apart Rs. 250/- for giving stipends to students in need. When I approached him, he at once put me at ease and was most kind. Wanting to be like the others was never his weakness, and though he was not a conformist even in his old college, this trait in him developed with age when he communed more and more with perennial values and became oblivious of the trivialities of life.

He was blessed that he had found his true mission in life and we are blessed that we were students of such a rare type of Professor.

HENRY STEPHEN  
—University Professor of English

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SUBODH CHANDRA SEN GUPTA

WHEN I think of my old days, faces of some eminent teachers swim into my ken... It is heartening to remember men whose memories loom large in an age of dwindling values. I recall, first of all, Henry Stephen, the University Professor of English...

Henry Stephen was a savant and a saint, and at a distance of half a century it would be difficult to convince a sceptical age that such a man ever existed. He came to India as a teacher of one of the two institutions subsequently merged into what is now the Scottish Church College. I have heard that in his early days he was a prodigy in Science and Mathematics, but he soon switched over to Philosophy, and of Philosophy, he became, with all respect to other prominent names, the most popular teacher in this part of the country. His still very readable *Problems of Metaphysics* is by my side as I am writing these lines, and it was at one time a 'must' for every student of the subject. What is not generally known is that when Sir Asutosh Mukherjee wanted a Professor of Philosophy in place of Brajendranath Seal, it was on Henry Stephen's expert advice that he offered the appointment to Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. By then Stephen himself had succeeded Robert Knox as Professor of English. I have heard that his first hurdle was that the salary of Rupees one thousand seemed to be too much for a poor Scotsman serving in a poorer country. So it was decided that he would accept Rs. 750/-, and the remainder would be disbursed as free-studentships. He had almost a genius for lucid exposition which made abstruse problems clear as daylight. This lucidity is very different from the facile prolixity of popular text-books which skirt the crux of philosophical problems by spreading out a screen of vague phrases that might mean anything or nothing. Henry Stephen, however, could be simple and precise in expression because he could throw light on the deeper recesses of his subject. His enduring contribution as Professor of English is embodied

in *A Syllabus of Poetics*, professedly an examination of the critical theories of Coleridge and Wordsworth but really an illuminating exposition of the mystery of poetic creation. I wonder if the present generation of students have heard of *A Syllabus of Poetics*, far less read it, but it is sure to come to its own again when the dust raised by fashionable clichés, such as 'Objective Corelatives', 'the inter-inanimation of words' has blown off.

When I was a student, Henry Stephen's best days were over, for as he ruefully said, his eyes were gone. But he was hefty and vigorous, and disdaining to use the lift, he would climb the stairs to the gallery on the third-floor of Darbhanga Building, where, with the help of magnifying glasses, he would write out his day's lecture on two large blackboards. It was a sight at once magnificent and pathetic. I shall close my account of him by recounting a tender anecdote about his conscientious scruples. He lived in an inexpensive hotel and used the cheapest form of travel—the tram car. His blindness made him the dupe of all who had spurious coins to pass off. So the first thing he would do on boarding the tram would be to hold out a handful of small coins before his nearest fellow-passenger who would select a good coin which he would present to the conductor when the latter would come to sell him his ticket. The caution, he thought, was necessary, because although he was obliged in his near blindness to accept bad coins, it would be improper for him to palm off any of these on the conductor, or on any one else.

## THE MASTER AS I KNEW HIM

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NIRMALA SINHA ( *nee* BOSE )

IT WAS the session 1922–1924 of M.A. English of Calcutta University. There were only three girls in the 5th year class of whom I was one. Sir Asutosh himself had welcomed us in the University. (Altogether there were six girl students in the University that year.) So, I may claim to be one of the last surviving students, at least surely the last living *woman* student, of our teacher Dr Henry Stephen. Almost all others—a few apart, may be—have gone to meet their Master in the Great Beyond.

It was in the 6th year class that I first met him. In our days, the Romantic Period was divided into two sections in the Syllabus with 200 marks allotted to it—as the VIth paper, i.e., Romantic Poetry and the VIIth paper, i.e., Romantic Prose. Dr Henry Stephen used to teach us the VIIth paper.

He was very tall, spare-built, always with a smile on his lips and was a very serious teacher. He was a Scot, besides which he had some oral defects which made it somewhat difficult for us to follow his lectures. He was quite aware of it, and for our convenience always wrote out his lectures on the blackboard of the classroom. These lectures were collected and printed by Calcutta University under the title of *A Syllabus of Poetics*.

This *A Syllabus of Poetics* is still a wonderful book, even if a little dated; not very big in size, it shows nevertheless how great an intellectual the author was. Our Syllabus of that paper included Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (not a few chapters as in today's syllabus—but the whole book), Wordsworth's *Preface* and Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. The first-named book terrified us with its bulk and intricate arguments. Dr Stephen was so great a savant, that he could easily and very gracefully come down to the level of the average intellect—and surely this is the very virtue of a true teacher. His treatment of the three authors was so simple, yet so

wonderful and lucid that we had no difficulty in mastering the contents. A later edition of *A Syllabus of Poetics* included *Aristotle's Poetics* and *Rhyme and Rhythm* – all very useful for learners like us, for we were really beginners. He made all the abstruse arguments very simple and easy. Everyone had a copy of that book, and I am not in the least ashamed to admit, after all these years, that I got through with very good marks by reading Dr Stephen's *A Syllabus of Poetics*. It is a pity that Calcutta University, having its own press, does not reprint the book, though I had repeatedly approached the authorities with the request.

Much later, when I was a lecturer here, I always advised my students to read Dr Stephen's *A Syllabus of Poetics*, telling them about the simple yet scholarly treatment of the subject by the great master. For I had never liked the idea of students getting the Master's degree without knowing what it is all about the three great prose pieces ; and throughout all the 15 years that I had been a teacher here, I told my students that that was how I was paying my *guru-dakshina* to my great master. Within ten years all the available copies were sold out and one agent of the book-shop requested me to ask the students to sell back their copies after passing the Examination. I did nothing of the sort, for I wanted my students to *possess* their copies, as I do mine – a treasure to keep forever. Calcutta University *should reprint* the book.

When he entered the classroom and stepped on the teacher's platform, we could hear the soft jingling of a bunch of keys, a tooth-pick, a watch, and some other small articles which dangled from his neck by a number of black tapes or ribbons, lying on his chest like necklaces. These produced a jingle whenever he moved. He had a Waterman pen, the type which wound the nib down after writing and required immediate replacement of the cap. Dr Stephen, like a true "absent-minded professor", very often forgot to do this after roll-calls, with the result that his jacket or shirt front was splashed with ink. Often boys came up and called his attention to the point, at which he smiled a very sweet shy and boyish smile and said something apologetic.

In the classroom he was oblivious of everything but his lectures. So, when he called our roll numbers, and we girls responded standing up, he being a bit hard of hearing could not hear us and would



stare straight ahead, shouting the rolls over and over again, while we helplessly remained standing. This was very amusing to the boys, who enjoyed the Professor's chagrin and our discomfiture, till some one came up to his table and pointed to us. His face would at once break into a smile and with an apologetic nod he would make a gesture to us to sit down. But if we ever met him outside the classroom, he would at once halt and wish us good morning or good afternoon with the invariable smiling query, "Are you a student of Philosophy?"

It seemed he was more interested in Philosophy. People used to say that he was the Head of both the departments of English and Philosophy! But of this I am not sure, I am only repeating what I heard those days.

Sometimes, in between writing lecture notes on the black board and supplementing it with some orally delivered lectures, he would get emotionally very much excited when dealing with Wordsworth. While writing this, I can still see his tall, spare, coated figure pacing by the students' benches in the Pischel Hall, reciting the immortal lines of *Tintern Abbey* :

".....A sense sublime,  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

With the recital, his pace quickened and he looked inspired and the grey-blue eyes lit up as he searched face after face of the students for an answering light. Philosophical inspiration? May be.

In those days, the Central Hall on the first floor of the Darbhanga Building was called the Reading Room where students of different subjects sat and studied at different tables. The Lending Library was just beneath this room on the ground floor. The Reading Room was always full of boys. Fresh from the long-standing, old-world traditions of seclusion and *pardah* (though we were pioneers at that period, of advanced studies for women), we felt very uneasy and awkward to sit among so many boys. Whenever we entered the room hundreds of pairs of curious eyes seemed to pierce us through and through and it was impossible for us to enter the room, far less to try to concentrate and study there. Dr Stephen realised

our difficulties. He had his own room adjoining the Reading Room, facing the Hindu Hostel. He said that his room would be open to us, where only a select few could enter. I can still see the picture of the book-lined room with two long green baize-covered tables placed side by side. There was a human skeleton hanging in one corner, and the Master sitting on an armchair on the opposite corner, deeply absorbed in his book. I had sat in the room and studied there many a day. At present this room is occupied by a section of the University Engineer's office.

Dr Henry Stephen, a bachelor, lived somewhere in the campus of The Scottish Churches College and gave all his earnings to the Scottish Mission ; only this much I know about his personal life, and that also from hearsay. But the Master as I knew him was a simple soul, untainted by any sort of pedantry, completely unconscious of his greatness, having all the marks of a genuine teacher and a true scholar—a real *guru*. That is how I remember him after more than half a century..

May his soul rest in peace.



In the next few pages are reprinted two extracts, one on *Memory* and the other on *Imagination*, both taken from Professor Henry Stephen's

**ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY  
A SHORT COURSE**

According to the Syllabus of Calcutta University  
***FOR THE STUDENTS OF THE DUFF COLLEGE.***

Printed at ELM PRESS. 29 Beadon Street, Calcutta.  
Printer B. K. Shaw.

Interestingly, and in conformity with the shy and self-effacing nature of Professor Stephen, his name does not appear anywhere in the rare volume which was kindly lent to the Editor of this special issue by Professor Subodh Kumar De who, in his turn, got it from a student of Professor Stephen.

In view of the fact that the contributors of articles on Dr Stephen in this issue of the Bulletin, all his ex-students, between the years 1912 and 1926, have written about their Master from *memory* which Professor Stephen calls "*reproductive imagination*", it is hoped that these two extracts on *Memory* and *Imagination* will be found relevant and interesting.

The third piece, *Performance of Othello*, is the only Magazine article written by Professor Henry Stephen that could be traced.

S.K.M.



## ON MEMORY

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HENRY STEPHEN

Memory—also called *representative*, or *reproductive* imagination, to distinguish it from *reconstructive* imagination proper—is the reproduction and re-presentation of past percepts of things in *the same form, order, and connexion in which they were originally experienced*, together with the *recognition* of them as having been experienced by ourselves at some particular point of past time. It includes, therefore, the power (i) of reproducing and *re-presenting* past experiences of our own in the form of mental images, with the same order and connexion as the original percepts ; (ii) of *recognising* these images or ideas as *re-presentations* of actual percepts of our own ; and (iii) of referring the experiences which they represent to their proper position (approximately at least) in past time (*localising* them, so to speak, in time).

Memory is called *reproductive* and *representative* imagination, because it reproduces and re-presents real past experiences in the form of mental images or concrete ideas. It is not *free*, like artistic imagination, but limited to *facts* by the consciousness of having experienced them.

\* \* \* \*

Memory, then, is the power of reproducing in the form of ideas or mental images, things and events formerly experienced by ourselves in reality, and of recognising these images as representations of things and events experienced by ourselves at some point of time in our past lives.

It implies, therefore, (i) the raising of certain ideas into consciousness, and keeping of them there for some time, as materials of thought ; (ii) the recognition of these ideas as reproductions or representations of past experiences (percepts) of our own ; and (as implied in recognition) (iii) a conception of time, and the series of experiences in time constituting our past life ; (iv) references of

the experiences thus reproduced and represented to a more or less definite position in the time-series of our life (a localisation of them, so to speak, in time), for mere revival of images reproducing, more or less, past experiences, but without recognition and time-reference, would not be memory, but only phantasy ; and finally, (v) it includes a consciousness of the self as the permanent subject of these successive experiences in time, for without this, recognition would be impossible, and memory meaningless. It is memory more than anything else that brings out the permanence and identity of the self. In reality, "memory is memory of self, and not of things."

\* \* \* \*

There are evidently, then, two main questions with regard to memory—(I) *how past experiences and acquisitions are preserved or retained unconsciously* in the interval between their first sinking out of consciousness, and their reproduction ; and (II) *how they are reproduced when wanted in the conscious form of ideas or mental images*—what Hamilton calls the question of *conservation and representation*.

Some writers, however, dismiss the question of conservation as unnecessary. When percepts pass out of consciousness, "nothing remains latent in the mind, but the power of reproducing them" (no effects, "traces" or "vestiges"). Knowledge of the past exists "not as a mental state but only as the capability of being put into a mental state" (Mill). But mind has not only a power and capability of reproducing percepts, but also a tendency and impulses to reproduce them. What, then, makes it to have this power and impulse ; why has it ideas of its own past experiences more than of other things ? Surely there must be some kind of connexion between past and present experiences, otherwise they could not be represented as one continuous life. The question of conservation, therefore, comes to be much the same as one considered before, *viz*, what makes the unity and continuity of the self—its personal identity ?

## IMAGINATION PROPER

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HENRY STEPHEN

Memory or reproductive imagination consists in making representations of past experiences, and recognising them as such ; and the perfection of memory consists in reproducing them exactly as they were experienced, with the least possible modification or reconstruction.

Constructive imagination, on the other hand, supposes materials supplied to it by memory of past experiences, but *consists in recombining and reconstructing these materials into images or representations of things and events which have never entered into our experience at all—* though they may or may not have entered into that of others. Thus in reading Roman history, or travels in central Africa, or in the Arctic regions, we are reconstructing, and representing in our minds, things which we have not ourselves experienced, though others have. In reading the geologist's description of the early ages of the earth, we are constructing scenes which have been experienced by no human being, but *might* have been, had human beings then existed. In reading the "Thousand and One Nights", or Scott's romances, we are constructing scenes which no one could have witnessed, because they never took place, and therefore indulging in pure fancy. In expectation, we are constructing scenes which we believe we shall ourselves experience in future.

Thus the scenes which imagination constructs may (1) be referred to a particular time, and believed to represent approximately real things and events, as in historical or scientific reconstruction, and in expectation ; or (2) be altogether independent of time and reality, as in pure fancy and romance. But whether they aim at representing reality, as in the former case, or merely at the pleasure of mental activity as in the latter, the process of construction itself is essentially the same.

... ..  
Another way of dividing mental constructions is according to the



way in which the mind obtains the materials for them, and the preliminary notion of the kind of construction wanted. This principle of division gives the division of imagination into *receptive* and *creative*.

*Receptive imagination*—is when the guiding idea of the construction, the materials, and the mode of combining them are suggested to the mind from without ; and all that it has to do is to put together the materials in the way suggested. Such imagination therefore is not original, but is a constructing over again of what others have perceived or constructed for themselves, and therefore of what has already passed through the minds of others.

Thus in hearing or reading a description or narrative of things and events which we have not seen, we are constructing images of these things and events as we proceed, but the forms of the images and the materials for them are *suggested* to us by the words of the writer. And what is called vigour, picturesqueness, or power of style in a writer is his power of suggesting images of his own mind to the mind of the reader by means of words, and helping him to picture with unusual vividness and clearness, scenes and events which he has never seen e.g. Tennyson and Carlyle.

*Creative or original imagination*—is when the idea and its materials are not thus suggested from without, but mind supplies or evolves the guiding idea from within itself, and raises the materials from among the contents of its own memory, and put them together according to its own creative impulse.

It is imagination of this higher kind that is required by the inventor who constructs a new combination of mechanical means to produce a desired effect ; the scientist and philosopher who constructs new hypotheses or theories to explain the hidden causes and reasons of things ; and by the artist, musician, and poet, who produces new combinations of forms and colours, sounds and ideas, such as will gratify the sentiment of the beautiful.

Thus imagination, when rightly regulated is conducive to the highest purposes of intellect. Yet it may be used in a way detrimental to it. People may surrender themselves so much to what they merely imagine, as finally to identify it with reality, and allow it to lead them away from truth ; or to become indifferent to, and neglect the realities and duties of life, and live in empty dreams. And further, it is apt to mix itself up automatically with *memory*, and even with *perception*

to some extent, so that we may think we perceive and remember what we merely imagine.

... ..  
Something remains to be said about the *development of imagination* in the life of the individual.

1. As it supposes materials, which must be supplied by experiences, preserved and reproduced by memory, there can be little imagination in the child's life until he has undergone many experiences, and his memory has become well-stocked with images of things.

2. As soon memory has developed sufficiently to supply materials, then imagination becomes very active, and indeed the predominant mental faculty for several years of life, as is manifested in play, in hearing and reading stories, fairy tales, adventures, and the like.

3. But in course of time, the reasoning powers begin to develop, and with them, the sense of reality, desire to know what is real, and dissatisfaction with mere play of fancy. One begins to feel more and more the practical necessities of life, and this draws the attention more and more towards real things, and away from the creations of imagination, except in so far as they may be subservient to knowledge, and practical purposes.

4. Later in life however imagination re-appears, with restricted limits, and in more refined form, as *aesthetic taste*, or appreciation of art and poetry, which takes the place of the more exuberant and playful fancy of the child.

DRAMATIC UNION  
PERFORMANCE OF *OTHELLO*

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HENRY STEPHEN

Under the auspices of the above Union a representation of Shakespeare's *Othello* was given by the students of the College on Thursday, the 3rd October.

Our University authorities are known to favour some cultivation of the arts of social entertainment among the students of its schools and colleges. The feature of physical amusements in the form of athletics, games and military drill is now well understood, and such exercises are extensively practised in all Calcutta schools and colleges. But there is still room for social accomplishments of the aesthetic and intellectual kinds. Music and art may seem to be pursuits too far out of connection with the normal run of college work, but dramatic entertainment has always been in line with college studies. This is especially the case where the plays studied and represented have been in the classical languages forming special studies in the schools. Hence the performance of Greek and Latin plays has always been a special feature in the most advanced European schools and colleges. To Indian students, English is what Greek and Latin were, and to some extent still are, to European schools, and plays of Shakespeare have to be studied here as plays of Euripides and Terence are in Europe, and the advantages of dramatic representations is still greater here for this reason, that the language has to be learnt for colloquial purposes, as well as for the more literary accomplishment. The educational value of such exercises in foreign language is beyond doubt. The acting of the play leads to such an understanding of its language and thought as can hardly be attained in any other way ; and the memory for words and distinctness and expressiveness of enunciation acquired in this way are of the highest value to the performers. Indian students have seen for themselves the value of the exercise, and recently they have made

the performance of Shakespeare plays, once a year at least, a common adjunct of their College work. They have undertaken the task voluntarily for their own culture and the entertainment of their fellows, and their work has been recognised, though not promoted by their colleges. Among the first, if not altogether the first to undertake such work were the students of the Duff College. From 1900 onwards such plays as *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night* were taken up. The stage apparatus, scenery, and costumes obtainable from Calcutta shops at that time were of a rather primitive kind. But the understanding of the characters, the elocution and action were often an agreeable surprise to the audience. The practice has been continued in the United College under more favourable circumstances. This year there was some difficulty about the selection of a play. The most familiar plays, and those most suitable for amateur performance had already been presented, some of them twice over. The selection at last fell on *Othello*—Sir Henry Irving's version. This selection certainly put the performers to some disadvantage as compared with those of former years. The subject was unfamiliar. The scenes are not such as to excite interest by variety or novelty, or by appealing to the imagination. The merit of the play lies in subtle developments of thought and feeling, which are difficult to render, and not easy to follow—requiring much mental effort on the part of both actors and audience. The entertainment, notwithstanding, with the careful training given by Mr Mauchline and the stage-management of Mr Monomohan Bose, was surprisingly successful and quite up to the level of former years.

The exceptionally subtle and laborious parts are, of course, those of *Othello*, *Desdemona* and *Iago*, and special thanks are due to the members of the Union who undertook these parts, and performed them so successfully. *Othello* was undertaken by Mr Raghabendra Banerjee of the 4th Year, who delineated very effectively the frankness and simplicity of the unsuspecting soldier, and his horror and remorse on finding at last how he had allowed himself to be befooled into crime. Mr A. Mercus of the 3rd Year undertook the part of *Desdemona*, and represented very gracefully and truthfully the simplicity and sincerity, and the tragical end of that much injured lady. The most complex and difficult part of all, perhaps, is that of *Iago*, which was undertaken by Mr Naresh Ch. Mitter, B.A.

Mr Mitter had already won reputation for himself as an actor by his remarkable presentation of Shylock in a former year ; but he had had an even more difficult task, perhaps, in rendering the mental subtleties of "that honest creature", Othello's most trusted friend. He deserves special thanks for the labour he must have spent in preparing this difficult part.

The complaint has been made sometimes that the secondary and minor characters are less carefully performed than the principal ones. This complaint can hardly be made this year.

... ..

The Union and the performers owe special thanks to the Principal, Dr Watt, for his permission and kind encouragement, and to their Vice-President, Mr Mauchline, for his valuable assistance in preparations, and to Mr Monomohan Bose for his kind support in the arrangement and management of the stage, and also to the Saraswati Jalataranga Concert Party for their music.

President  
Dramatic Union.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The Editor acknowledges with gratitude the willing co-operation rendered by the former students of Dr Henry Stephen who have paid homage to their teacher through their reminiscences, published in this volume. It is indeed gratifying that in spite of the handicap of age and health—the seniormost among them being near ninety and the juniormost near eighty—all of them responded to our request to write for this special issue of the Bulletin. Through their eyes the Departed Great lives once more for the present generation of teachers and students, to inspire them with all that is noble and elevating in the life of a scholar and a teacher.

We are thankful to the Principal of the Scottish Church College for permission to reprint two valuable obituary articles on Dr Henry Stephen from the College Magazine, one, by the Rev. James Watt, Principal, Scottish Churches College (1910 – 1928), and the other by Dr Adityanath Mookherjee, a former student of Dr Stephen in the College, and later, Principal, Sanskrit College, Calcutta (1924-30), and Registrar, University of Calcutta (1931) and George V Professor of Philosophy (offg), Calcutta University (1933-1935). The third one, from the pen of Professor Stephen himself, A Review of a dramatic performance, is also from the Scottish Churches College Magazine. Our thanks are due also to the Librarian of the Scottish Church College who kindly lent us an old photograph of the Professor which enabled us to prepare a block for the picture of Dr Henry Stephen printed in this issue.

We also thank Prof. S. K. De, formerly Vice-Principal, Scottish Church College, and Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Calcutta University, for giving the Editor of this issue a printed copy of Professor Stephen's class-lectures (not available anywhere) from which two extracts on *Memory* and *Imagination* have been taken.

Other articles in this issue relate to the subject in which Professor Stephen was interested—literary criticism, which also he taught in the Post-Graduate classes in the University, except Prof. K. C. Lahiri's which relates an interesting history of the English Department which Professor Stephen joined at its inception.

SUSHIL KUMAR MUKHERJEE



# ***ESSAYS***





## THE POST-GRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH in the University of Calcutta

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K. LAHIRI

### I

THIS premier University of India was founded in the year of the Sepoy Mutiny. At the centenary celebration in January, 1957, a commemoration volume was brought out with contributions of distinguished scholars. But no attempt was made therein to write a systematic, connected history of the study of English or of any other branch of study in this university. An earlier brochure, much smaller in size and more limited in scope, printed privately under the inspiration of the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Pramatha Nath Banerjee, traced briefly the development of the Post-graduate studies in Arts from 1907 to 1948. An independent and comprehensive study of the growth and expansion of the Post-graduate Department of English is yet to be undertaken.

Founded under Act No. II of 1857, passed by the Legislative Council, and granted the Governor-General's assent on January 24, the university remained, under the Act of Incorporation, for about half a century, exclusively an affiliating and examining body ; its activities were confined to the recognition of academic institutions of a certain educational standard, and to conducting different public examinations for testing the acquisitions and merits of candidates presented by them. The idea of teaching and research at the post-graduate stage was yet premature. Even the question of prescribing suitable books for study at the university level did not engage the attention of the university before 1881. Towards the end of that year the Senate directed the Syndicate to ask the Faculty of Arts to appoint permanent Boards of Studies chosen from among their own members for the selection of text-books. Several Boards, including a Board of Studies in English and other European languages, were appointed on January 28, 1882.

The introduction of studies in English at the post-graduate stage,

along with that of other disciplines, did not come earlier than the late first decade of the present century. It was the Regulations framed under the Indian Universities Act of 1904 that provided opportunities for the expansion of the University from an affiliating and examining agency to a centre of higher studies and original research. From the very inception the post-graduate course in English occupied an important place among the humanities, a position it enjoyed for about fifty years till after Independence, when the Indian languages, Economics and Political Science gradually received more attention and attracted a larger number of students.

Between 1910 and 1916 only a small beginning was made in providing for the study of English Literature and Language at the post-graduate level. The Professorship of English Language and Literature, along with those of Philosophy, Higher Mathematics, Comparative Philology, and Ancient Indian History and Culture, was created as a result of the inspiration received from King George V during his Coronation Visit to his Indian Empire in 1911-1912. In the Department of English two British teachers were appointed in the persons of Dr H. Stephen and Mr R. Knox; and associated with them there was a small band of Indian scholars including Mr Roby Dutta, Dr H. C. Maitra, Dr H. C. Mookerjee, and Mr J. G. Banerji.

At the beginning of the organisation of the Post-graduate Department in the University, it was not intended to eliminate M.A. studies in the affiliated colleges where partial provision for them had already existed. Thus lectures were being delivered in certain colleges on parts of some subjects. English classes for Post-graduate students were held also at the Presidency College, Calcutta, and Cotton College, Gauhati. This arrangement was continued even long after the University Post-graduate Department had started functioning, the objective of which was rather to effectively supplement the work done in the colleges by arranging for more thorough work at the University. Measures to concentrate Post-graduate studies in the university were taken when it was felt that these were receiving less and less attention in the affiliated colleges where the pressure on under-graduate classes naturally increased. By 1916 it was realised that the dual arrangement of Post-graduate studies in the Colleges and at the University was not helpful towards their development in a co-ordinated, comprehensive, and efficient way. It was proving increasingly difficult to control Post-graduate studies in the colleges so as to co-ordinate them

with the work done at the University and so make them conform to the desired standard. So the university made a direct arrangement for teaching the more important subjects irrespective of what was being done in the colleges. And the process of concentration was satisfactorily completed with the requisitioning of the services of the qualified people from the colleges as Part-time Lecturers in the University Post-Graduate Department. After the passing of the Calcutta University Act of 1951 some of the constituent and affiliated colleges started or revived post-graduate teaching partially ; the Presidency College, Calcutta, has partially revived M.A. classes in English.

On the recommendation of the Sadler Commission (1917) for the establishment of a fully equipped teaching university the post-graduate studies were stabilized under the control of Councils of Post-Graduate teaching, and the Department of English was expanded with a full contingent of teachers. In December, 1928, a Committee of Enquiry with 18 members and the Reverend W. S. Urquhart as Chairman was set up to scrutinize the activities and needs of the different departments of post-graduate studies, and its report was discussed by the Senate in March-April, 1930. While appreciating the work of the Department of English, the Committee recommended some measures for expansion in respect of teaching and research.

## II

Great difficulty was experienced, at the initial stage in organizing the P.G. Department, in securing suitable teachers of English. On October 16, 1912, Vice-Chancellor Asutosh Mookerjee wrote to Professor H. M. Percival, then living in retirement in England, with a request to come down to Calcutta to organize the Post-graduate English Department ; but the latter could not return to active life in India because of indifferent health.

When the popularity of English as a subject for post-graduate studies reached its zenith about 1920-1921, the teaching staff numbered 22, consisting of one Professor and 21 lecturers, of whom 13 were whole-time teachers of the university and 8 were part-time lecturers from colleges. After the attainment of political independence of the country, as interest in English waned and the number of students in the subject fell, the size of the staff gradually shrank. In 1948-1949 the number of teachers in the English Department was 16, consisting

of a Professor, 6 whole-time Lecturers, 6 part-time Lecturers and 3 whole-time Tutors. In 1956-1957 the number of teachers in the Department came further down to 11, consisting of a Professor, 1 Reader, 4 whole-time Lecturers, and 5 part-time Lecturers, the posts of the Tutors having been abolished. At the present moment (1978 March) the Department has 23 teachers : 1 Professor, 5 Readers, 7 whole-time Lecturers, and 10 part-time Lecturers. The question of expansion or rather of restoration of the former strength of the staff needs be taken up for several considerations. First, there is an increasing pressure in recent years for admission to the post-graduate English class. Then, the M.A. syllabus in English has recently been enlarged, covering Ancient Classics, Modern European Literature, American Literature, and a rational language course in Contemporary English in all its aspects of Phonetics, Linguistics, and Stylistics for the Literature Group (Group 'A'), and three new optional papers, namely, Gothic in relation to English, Medieval European classics, and Historical Study of the English Language, for the Language Group (Group 'B'). Then there is a steady increase in the number of research students working on English Literature and Language, and on their aspects having relevance to India, or on Indo-English Literature. And we all feel the necessity of implementing a sound plan of effective Tutorials, the urgency of which can hardly be over-emphasized. There is also the necessity of checking the fast-declining standard of English throughout the country.

The Departmental Chair of English was held by these distinguished scholars, European and Indian: Professor Robert Knox, M.A. (Oxon.) (1914-1919); Professor Henry Stephen, M.A., Ph.D., D.D. (Aberd.) (1919-1927), formerly Professor of Free Church Institution and of Scottish Churches College; Professor Joy Gopal Banerjee, M.A. (1927-1936), formerly Principal of Victoria College, Cooch-Bihar; Professor Harendra Coomar Mookerjee, M.A., Ph.D. (1936-1940), formerly Principal of Rajchandra College, Barisal, and later Secretary, Council of Post-Graduate Teaching in Arts, Inspector of Colleges, and Governor of West Bengal; Professor Mohini Mohan Bhattacharya, M.A., Ph.D. (1945-1955), formerly an Advocate of Calcutta High Court and Part-time Lecturer, P. G. Dept. Calcutta University, Professor Amy Geraldine Stock, M.A. (Oxon.). Dip. in Ed. (Oxon.) (1956-1961), formerly Professor of Punjab University and later of the Universities of Dacca and Jaipur;

Professor Amalendu Bose, M. A., D. Phil. (Oxon) (1961-1973), formerly Professor of Aligarh Muslim University; Professor Bhabatosh Chatterjee, M. A., Ph. D., D.Litt. (1976—), formerly Professor of Burdwan University.

Some of the distinguished whole-time teachers of the English Department were Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, M.A., D.Litt., formerly Professor of Vidyasagar College, and later Professor of Comparative Philology and Linguistics, then Chairman of West Bengal Legislative Council, and finally National Professor; Amiya Chakravarti, M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon), Visiting Professor in some universities, including Howards and Boston, in U.S A. Among the part-time teachers of English in the P. G. Department of the University there were the following: Professor Prafulla Chandra Ghose, Dr Srikumar Banerjee, Professor Tarak Nath Sen, Dr Subodh Chandra Sengupta, from Presidency College; Professor Scrimgeur, Professor Mowat, Professor Sushil Chandra Dutta from Scottish Churches College; Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra, Principal Rajani Kanta Guha, from City College; Rev. C. S. Milford from St. Paul's College; and Rabindra Narayan Ghose from Ripon College.

The centenary volume of Presidency College describes Prof. P. C. Ghose as "the greatest teacher of English in the annals of the Presidency College. While his far-reaching scholarship, amazing mastery of English, and incomparable teaching abilities, including a rare gift for reading, breathed life into any topic or author he was asked to teach, whether it was Poetry or Philology, Chaucer or Milton, the Bible or Lytton Strachey, it was on Shakespeare that he reached the peak of his form and gave to generations of students an experience that can only be described as wonderful." Dr Srikumar Banerjee possessed a unique power of analysis and elucidation of literary subtleties. Principal Rabindra Narayan Ghose was another singular figure among the part-timers who was not only one of the most loved and revered but unquestionably one of the finest teachers of English Bengal has produced in the present century, one gifted with a rare literary sense.

### III

From the very beginning of the M.A. Examination in the University, even before the post-graduate classes were started, English had been a very popular subject with students. As early as

1912 as many as 70 examinees offered themselves for English ; and recently the number rose 20 times, the larger number being private candidates, coming from different spheres of life, from school teachers to business executives.

Since the inception of Post-Graduate teaching in the University in 1917 the popularity of the English class was quite high and unabating. Students rushed to this department in such a large number that it sometimes became a difficult problem to keep them out to avoid congestion. Consequently English classes were always very big and unwieldy. For a period of several years, at the height of popularity, they had to be split up into sections which, at one stage, numbered 3 for each of the preliminary and final, then known as the Fifth and the Sixth, Year classes. In the academic session 1918–1919 arrangements were made for, besides the general lecture classes, a large number of Tutorials, each group consisting of about 15 students. In the Minutes of the Senate, dated the 23rd August 1919, in a review of the condition of Post-Graduate Studies the number of students in the Department of English was recorded as 521, consisting of 300 in the Fifth year class and 221 in the Sixth. During the session 1920–1921 the number of students in the Department was 449, consisting of 241 in the Fifth year class and 208 in the Sixth, compared to only 180 in the Department of Economics and Political Philosophy, which did not as yet bifurcate into two independent departments of Economics and Political Science. After Independence there came a craze for nationalization of the medium of instruction, and as a result, for a session or two (1948–1950) the number of students seeking admission to the M.A. English class began to fall. The reaction was only a temporary phase, and as things settled down, the importance of the study of English reasserted itself. In the session 1956–1957 the number of students in the English Department was 266, consisting of 150 in the Fifth Year class and 116 in the Sixth, out of 3,357 in all the 54 departments of Arts, Commerce, Science and Technology, that is, 8 per cent of the total number of Post-Graduate students. The present (1977–1978) strength of the English class, admission being restricted to Honours Graduates, stands at about 400, equally distributed to two sections each in the First and Second Year M.A. classes. The demand for an expansion of the facilities for studying English is rising so high that in the near future provisions may have to be made here, as have already been made in the two other

Universities in the city, for an evening shift for the benefit of those who work during the day-time.

The total worth of an academic institution is to be assessed not simply by its roll-strength of students and the size of its teaching staff but also by its contribution to original research in the particular branch of knowledge and healthy co-curricular activities which help foster youth welfare in national life.

It is sometimes felt, with regret, that corresponding to the tradition of a quite high standard of teaching an equally glorious record of research work has not been shown consistently by the English Department of Post-Graduate studies in the University. The allegation, not wholly unfounded, applies not simply to this University but to the country as a whole, for, although a large body of men and women have acquired an excellent mastery of English literature and language, and some of them have shown merit, even genius, in original composition in that language, what is called a systematic research either in its linguistic characteristics or in its literary aspects have not been achieved to a desirable extent. The comparative paucity in the production of high standard research work in English is not due to any inertia or incapacity of our alumni, but there are certain initial handicaps inherent in the very circumstances of the case. Original investigations in English literature and language in an Indian University involve difficulties, almost insurmountable, such as non-availability of books, original and critical, and difficulty of access to source materials, like manuscripts and documents, in U. K. and the continent, besides stringency and tardiness in the allocation of grants necessary for ensuring freedom and whole-hearted devotion of the research worker.

Despite the above and many other practical difficulties the English Department has contributed its full share to the reputation established as a centre of learning and research. Quite early the University made arrangements to offer facilities for research immediately after it was empowered to that effect by the Indian Universities Act, 1904, and the regulations made thereunder. Since the organization of the Post-Graduate Department of English research papers and volumes have been regularly produced covering a variety of subjects ranging from studies in Old English to those in contemporary literature. Then there has been regularly a band of research scholars and students, working for doctoral degrees—D. Phil., Ph. D., D. Litt.—



under the guidance of teachers and retired teachers of the Department, and their total output is not negligible in quantity and quality ; some of these theses have been published by the University itself. Many of these papers and theses produced by the teachers and scholars are of quite high standard and would do credit to a department of English studies in any university outside England. These have received wide recognition in academic circles at home and abroad.

## A REVIEW OF STEPHEN'S

### *A Syllabus of Poetics\**

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S. K. DAS

I was first introduced to Henry Stephen's *A Syllabus of Poetics* by my teacher, Professor Jitendranath Chakraborty. It was in 1954 when I was called upon to lecture on Wordsworth's *Preface* (1800) to undergraduate students in a Calcutta college. I was particularly struck by the clarity of Stephen's thought and the lucidity of his exposition. Then in 1961 I re-read the treatise while I was engaged in writing a book on Wordsworth's theory of the imagination. Even today I cannot think of any other treatise of the same kind in which the most abstract ideas are presented in such a transparent manner. It is a pity that the book has escaped the notice of the editors of *The English Romantic Poets*, *Cornell Wordsworth Collection*, and *Wordsworthian Criticism*; and in our country many of the present generation have not cared to see what *A Syllabus of poetics* has to offer.

The first five parts of the book are outlines of lectures delivered at the University of Calcutta between 1923 and 1927 and they were based on Wordsworth's *Preface*, (1800 & 1802), relevant chapters of *The Biographia Literaria* and Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. The last three parts deal with Aristotle's *Poetics*, principles of poetry as applied to criticism, and classical and romantic poetry. These lectures were recommended for Post-graduate study by the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, the Vice-Chancellor and President of the Post-graduate Department at that time. Stephen considers the three short tractates—Wordsworth's *Preface*, *The Biographia Literaria* and Shelley's *Defence*—by three of the great poets as “the clearest, the most succinct, most to the point and most suggestive”. Aristotle's *Poetics* was added as “the most condensed and authoritative description of the classical type of poetry.” Parts VI, VII and VIII are

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\**A Syllabus of Poetics*, Calcutta University, 1927.

reprinted from articles published in *The Calcutta Review*. The essay on romanticism was meant as an aid to the study of Wordsworth : but those sections on the music of poetry have led to some repetition of topics. However, the general account of poetry given here is in agreement with that of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley.

To the student of English literature Wordsworth's theory of the imagination is important today primarily for two reasons. First it provides a point of view from which one can measure the varying degrees of success that Wordsworth attained as a poet. It is still the general feeling that Wordsworth's position in English literature and his genius as a poet has not been acknowledged without the reservation that characterizes the status of great poets like Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Keats. Evidence of this feeling exists in the marked ambivalence of attitude to much of Wordsworth's poetry shown by the adherents of the New Criticism. With a few exceptions they grant greatness to the poetry of Wordsworth but find it less suited to their orientation and skill than the more subtle linguistic complexities in the poetry of Donne or Eliot. I do not wish to imply any disparagement for this school of criticism, for their method of explication has revealed unsuspected beauties in Wordsworth's poetry. I appreciate specially Stephen's suggestion that most of Wordsworth's poems cannot be fully understood until they are read according to the principles which the poet himself enunciated.

Secondly, a study of Wordsworth's theory is important because there is still much disagreement about his theory. The Preface of 1800 has been regarded as "first-class pamphleteering" and his "metaphysic of poetry" has been questioned. It has also been said that Wordsworth was not an ideal expositor and that there are contradictions that mar his theory. Stephen's analysis offers us a careful examination of the *Preface* and after making due allowance for the inconsistencies and contradictions in the formulation of his theories he determines the conditions under which they can be accepted.

Stephen states his view of poetry clearly : "Poetry is a revelation and expression of those truths which affect most directly the well-being and destiny of humanity and thereby touch most strongly the human feelings." And then he goes on to distinguish in a general way seven different periods in which different circumstances of

the English people have given rise to different kinds of poetry, by producing different kinds of thought and different ways of expression. While giving a brief account of each of these periods Stephen seems to follow the traditional method of dividing the periods of English literature and his comments on the characteristic qualities of each period are not novel, but they are straightforward and unambiguous. But the student of literature today may not agree with him when he remarks that the lyric poetry of the metaphysicals "declined from sincere thought and feeling into artificial metaphor, conceits and affectation (e. g. in Lyly, Donne and Cowley)". Stephen's observation on the eighteenth century is also an instance of imperfect sympathy. Only when he approaches the poetry of Wordsworth, he seems to be on firm ground. He begins his examination of Wordsworth's theory by refuting some popular misconceptions about the Preface :

Many critics, from Coleridge onwards, have represented him as teaching that the subject and style of his Ballads of humble life, ought to be the subject and style of all poetry—both of his own and that of others. Then, when they find that Wordsworth like other poets varies his style in keeping with his subject, they accuse Wordsworth of departing from his principles, and by his practice, contradicting his own teaching. But Wordsworth never really departed from his teaching which was, that poetry is a revelation of truth ; that it consists in thought (truth) and feeling, and not in artificial poetic diction ; and that thought and feeling are best expressed when expressed in the simplest possible language, which is never very different from the speech of common life ; and that gaudy language and figures of speech are but too often disguises to conceal poverty of thought and unreality of feeling.

Stephen suggests that Wordsworth's *selection* is not basically different from the search for precision which every writer makes, the search for the right word, the authentic idiom, the logically ordered pattern of the sentence, or the illuminating metaphor. Besides, the phrase 'the real language of man' according to Stephen may be said to have been used in a general sense and it applies both to poems written in a commonplace style as well as those written in a heightened style. This seems to be the one common designation for the

language of both these classes of poems. It is from this standpoint that we can justify the poet's employment of the phrase.

Stephen also rejects the popular notion derived from the *Preface* that Wordsworth insisted that all poetry should deal with humble and rustic life.

It should be noticed that though Wordsworth is here merely explaining why some of the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* deal with 'humble and rustic life', Coleridge and many others have assumed that he is here teaching that all poetry should deal with 'humble (Coleridge even makes him say *low*) and rustic life', which is certainly very far from the truth. All that he says is, that humble and rustic life is a legitimate source of poetic thought and feeling.

Wordsworth speaks of the 'majority' of his poems in the first volume as having been written 'in the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society'. He does not extend the remark to the entire body of poems in that volume. There is another aspect of Wordsworth's theory which is linked with his theory of *selection*: the desirability of choosing the more impassioned experiences and feelings of rustic life. In his actual choice of incidents Wordsworth seems hardly influenced by such a consideration; but this was due to the fact that to him, imbued as he was with a strong sense of the passionate character of rustic life, a mere hint of passion was sufficient to determine the choice of the subject matter.

Coleridge and other critics following him think that Wordsworth assumes the language of 'humble and rustic life' to be the only real language of men and, therefore, teaches that all poetry should be composed in the language of these people...Wordsworth, however, uses the word 'generally' meaning that his principle need not be taken to exclude cases in which the best possible expression may require words or phrases different from common language, as is often the case in the later plays of Shakespeare, in Milton, and sometimes (though rarely) in Wordsworth himself. Nevertheless, he reminds us that the greater part of all poems and nearly all the best passages in poetry, are composed in language not essentially different from that of good prose and common life.

Stephen refutes the charge against Wordsworth's poetry, specially

the notion that his poems were based on trivial thought, by saying that every one of his poems had a 'worthy purpose'.

Stephen's observations on Romantic poetry are adequate ; he says that "Romantic poetry does not merely describe the outside of things, but shows things to be suggestive of a world of reality beyond themselves." But when he approaches the distinction between Fancy and Imagination he seems to be hesitant. It is a pity that he ignores altogether the *Preface* (1815) where Wordsworth provides a defence of the schematic division of his poems. Besides, a rigid application of the theory of separate stages in the growth of the poet's mind is likely to violate the very centre of Wordsworth's belief in the unity of the mind. The nature of this belief has been clearly expressed in *The Convention of Cintra* in which the unity of the mind is linked with the belief in cosmic unity. The same belief is also expressed in the solemn tones of the *Immortality Ode* and in *The Prelude*. Perhaps it would have been better to characterize two distinctly different modes of poetry as having their roots in two quite different traditions—the loco-descriptive poetry of the eighteenth century and the doctrines of German transcendentalism.

*A Syllabus of Poetics* was based on lectures delivered to the post-graduate students of the University of Calcutta : and it contains areas which necessarily overlap. But in spite of its repetition of ideas at times, it is a clear and lucid elucidation of how a poet breaks away from the formal strait-jacket and discovers his own real voice. There is no doubt that this collection of essays, if reprinted by the University of Calcutta, would be of considerable help to students of literature who wish to acquaint themselves with a variety of approaches brought together to stimulate rather than merely guide and instruct.

## THE EYE : A RENAISSANCE MIRROR

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ARUN K. DASGUPTA

THE object of this paper is to explore the possibilities of the mirror as an image for understanding some aspects of the problem of knowledge central to Renaissance thought. These aspects are inter-related. They have, moreover, as I hope to show, some bearing on the artistic problem of the Renaissance. In the first part of this article I shall use an illustration from Bovilius' *Liber de Intellectu* as the frame of reference and, in the second, a few passages from Leonardo da Vinci's *Notebooks*.

### I

Renaissance thinkers and artists had some skill in constructing models which at once mirror their norms of thought and reveal their intelligence. One such model, the central one, was Man. But man himself is endowed with a superb organ, the eye, which establishes his claim to a power of vision uniquely his. Now, the eye is a mirror<sup>1</sup>, and its significance as a mirror is twofold : it is a mirror of vanity or self-indulgence, as also of self-awareness.<sup>2</sup>

The illustration representing the Orders of Nature and of Man in Bovilius' *Liber de Intellectu*<sup>3</sup> may serve as our starting point. The two orders are, we notice, held together by the central figure of the mind-man or the sage, who is *Homo Studiosus* at the apex of the Order of Man and *Homo Rationale* at that of the Order of Nature. To interpret this central figure in the structural scheme of Bovilius' Orders in relation to the figures placed in an ascending order on either side, we have to start at the base. This is divided in eight sections, four on the side of Nature and four on the side of Man. The word 'EST' found all along the base indicates mere being or existence as distinct from the higher levels of life we find as we go up in stages. On the left, there is first *petra* or stone, which belongs to the mineral order, the lowest, of nature, having neither life nor feeling. The corresponding figure of the man on the other side (the

Order of Man) is, accordingly, the stone-man. He sits huddled up, his head (the seat of intelligence) almost buried in his hands : he is inert and dumb. That is how the slothful, melancholy figure of *acedia* appears. The representation is apt, because, like the stone, he shows no sign of life or feeling or thought.

We have the same analogy established between the tree, which has life only (i.e. is capable of nourishment alone), and the glutton or the man of appetite (*gula*) whose sole capacity, apart from mere being, lies in being fed (i.e. in the passive satisfaction of his appetite). Similarly, the horse which, representing the sensible life, has being, life and feeling, corresponds to the sensual man dedicated to the pleasure of the eye, the life of the senses only. Finally, we have the man who represents intelligence, the composite somewhat Janus-like figure of the mind-man or sage.<sup>4</sup> The essence of his wisdom appears to lie in his ability to synthesise in their perfection the two ascending levels of being as they meet in him and so gather his own crucial significance in his central, unifying position.

Bovilius seems to imply that man can place himself at any of the four stages from the stone-man to the mind-man. Of quite some interest is the figure, *Luxuria*, holding a mirror in hand. The irony lies here in the use of the mirror. This is the mirror of delusion and it reflects the folly of the life typified. The intended contrast seems to be with the figure, *Virtus*, immediately above, whose nature is indicated by the descriptive epithet *studiosus*. Instead of a mirror he holds a book in his hand and that is his mirror, the mirror of knowledge. His counterpart in the Order of Nature, with whom he is necessarily identified, *Homo Rationale*, is self-sufficient. His eye is turned inward ; he uses it as the mirror of self-knowledge. He is the type of the wise man.

Let us turn now from this illustration from Bovilius' *Liber* to the portrait of a shameless, vain and sensual woman sitting in front of her mirror. It is the portrait of Diane de Poitiers<sup>5</sup>, mistress of King Henry II of France, later made the Duchess of Valentinois. The way in which the inner, covertly allegorical meaning is mirrored in the portrait is rather striking. The idea of *Luxuria* is merely suggested. The more obviously allegorical figure in Bovilius' illustration contains the hard allegorical core of this picture of Henry II's mistress, so sumptuously invested with allurements accentuated by the only vesture



she wears, her semi-nudity, which is very different from pure nudity. She seems to display it, being a *meretrix*.

The figure with a mirror in Bovilius' illustration is a fool. The wise man, by contrast, is without a mirror because he is his own mirror. He is also a mirror of the universe, a *universi speculum*, a *speculum vivens*. The fool in Shakespeare turned the tables on the wise man by turning him into a mirror of knowledge for his own use. The fool has only to gaze at him to find his own likeness. Thus a fool may grow wise at the expense of the wise man who is really a fool; but only too conceited to know it. The wise man, in his turn, had only to face the fool to learn his lesson of humility, the essence of wisdom or self-knowledge. That is how Shakespeare presents the central paradox of wisdom. The protean nature of man is thus reflected in the protean nature of human wisdom. Thus does Shakespeare hold the mirror of his art up to nature, for is he (the fool) not "Nature's natural" ?

We may also recall how in *King Lear* (III. iv. 26-33), wisdom dawns on Lear as he looks at the Fool. He looks at him at that moment in a way he had never done before, no longer as a mirror of self-conceit, but as a mirror of self-awareness. The thought which begins to form with the words (which are not addressed to the Fool), 'You houseless poverty', breaks off (1.26), and is resumed at 1.28. We are shown here in a concrete and dramatic manner the very process of wisdom, its gestation, the pangs attendant upon the birth of Minerva, so to speak, as she is about to rend the skull, that battered storm-swept head of Lear's, 'so old and white'. As that line (1.26) breaks off, we glimpse the first, faint glimmering notion. He pauses, because something has struck him. But the state of mind he is in, tottering perilously on the brink of insanity, does not allow him to retain his hold on the thought he has glimpsed merely. But presently it comes (ll. 28-33), and the sudden onrush of the tide of truth washes off the taint of his own unpardonable folly: he is half-redeemed. Thus, even as he bends in courtesy—a touching gesture—saying, "In boy, go first" (1.26), he is about to rise, a new man almost. Very soon he will be indeed another man in a very different sense, but on that stormy night Shakespeare sows the seed of Lear's redemption. In spite of the imminent outbreak of his insanity we have here revealed the true significance of the theme of renewal of life, of *renaissance* or *re-birth*.<sup>4</sup> It coincides with the birth of truth in a soul darkened,

almost demented, torn by grief and anger, tormented by an impotent passion for revenge. All this, we realize, is concentrated in the central paradox of the fool, a mere boy clinging to an old man in an eternal embrace of understanding.

Finally, before concluding our observations in this section, let us consider briefly the artistic possibilities of the structure—the ideal pyramidal one—somewhat akin to the one suggested by the arrangement of the figures in the illustration from Bovilius' *Liber de Intellectu* already discussed. The triangle offers, as in some portraits of artists as different as Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael<sup>7</sup>, a unique scope for enclosing reality as well as elevating it to an ideal plane. In Leonardo's scheme the vision is directed to the background of a cosmos of mysterious depth, the apex of the visible triangle being, as it were, the centre of an invisible globe whose mysterious topography is revealed though the highly suggestive *chiaroscuro* which characterizes Leonardo's mature style. In Raphael the same is the calm centre of the ideal and radiant circular frame of the picture itself, his favourite *tondo*.

We may consider also in this connection the characteristic difference in the function of the eye as the focal point in the portrait as conceived by these two artists. With Leonardo, the classic instance is the portrait of Mona Lisa. As we stand and gaze at her, she seems to change like a living person : a striking proof of the imaginative truth of the transforming power of man as artist or maker. Here the eye assumes the rôle of a mediator between the intelligible and the sensible segments of the cosmos of the picture itself.

In the eyes of Raphael's Madonnas, in the eyes even of his Galatea, we seem to grasp the ideal centre of the picture, the centre from which the serene ideality of Raphael's *amor* radiates. This serenity is independent of a sacred or a profane content. It is expressive of an essential repose in the midst of the subtly ordered movements of figures that seem to revolve around Galatea, some caught even in gestures of passionate abandonment. We understand why, when asked, "Where in all the world did you find a model of such beauty ?", Raphael replied that he followed 'a certain idea' he had formed in his mind.<sup>8</sup>

## II

Let us now consider the significance of the mirror of art, having quoted earlier the phrase used by Hamlet when speaking to the players about 'the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to *hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature*' (*Ham.* III. 2.25). It would be useful to consider at first certain remarks made by Leonardo da Vinci in praise of the painter who, he claims, is the *paragone*, "lord of all types of people and of all things."<sup>9</sup>

The argument relates to the immediacy of reflection that painting alone as medium can offer the universe as subject matter.

"Whatever exists in the universe", says Leonardo, "in essence, in appearance, in the imagination, the painter has *first in his mind and then in his hand* and these are of such excellence that they can present a proportioned and harmonious view of the whole that can be seen simultaneously, at one glance, *just as things in nature.*" (Italics mine).<sup>10</sup> In a mirror things can be so *seen* "simultaneously, at one glance, just as things in nature."

For Leonardo things had to be made *visible*. He described painting as "the sole imitator of all the visible works of nature." The adversary, both in life and art, of Michelangelo, who strove to emancipate the soul, the form, of a statue from the stubborn stone ('*per forza di levare*'), Leonardo held ideas opposed to Neo-Platonism. For him, as Panofsky says,<sup>11</sup> the soul is not held in bondage by the body, but, rather, the body is held in bondage by the soul. In painting he found the key with which to keep and confine the beauty of the physical universe. We may recall how Gerard Manly Hopkins uses the word "key" in the opening lines of *The Leaden Echo* :

"How to keep—is there any any, is there none such, nowhere known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or catch or *key* to keep / Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty,...from vanishing away?"<sup>12</sup> It is in this unique power, according to Leonardo, to preserve entire, as in a mirror, the body, as distinct from the soul, of things that painting "excels and ranks higher than music, because it does not fade away, as soon as it is born, as is the fate of unhappy music. On the contrary, it endures and has all the appearance of being alive, though in fact it is confined to one surface."<sup>13</sup> "Confined to one

surface": how aptly this brings out the analogy with a mirror ! The image reflected in a mirror is only surface-deep, but how deep that surface can be ! It reflects clearly and all at once whatever it receives in its bosom.

The analogy, as also the claim that painting is superior to all other arts, is based on the depth, clarity, vividness and immediacy of its appeal to the eye which was regarded as "the nobler sense". To quote from Leonardo :

"If the poet serves the understanding by the ear, the painter does so by the eye—the nobler sense ;...Undoubtedly the painting being by far the more *intelligible* and *beautiful* will please more".<sup>14</sup>

"The eye which is called the window of the soul is the chief means whereby the understanding can most fully and abundantly appreciate the infinite works of nature."<sup>15</sup>

The medium of painting is essentially a mirror of knowledge, the knowledge of the universe in fact, because it makes possible the ideal coincidence of beauty and intelligibility. "Art is not the mere reproduction of a ready-made, given reality."<sup>16</sup> It is not an imitation, but a discovery of reality, i.e., of its organic unity. As Cassirer says, while science demonstrates this unity by abbreviating reality (i.e., by abstraction), art does so by intensifying it (i.e., by concretion). It does not enquire into the causes of things ; it gives us the form of things or rather, the intuition thereof. The artist thus is as much a discoverer as the scientist. One discovers forms, the other facts or laws. "The great artists of all times", says Cassirer, "have been cognizant of this special task and special gift of art. Leonardo da Vinci spoke of the purpose of painting and sculpture in the words 'saper vedere'."<sup>17</sup> The infinite variations, the untold possibilities of visual experience "become actualities in the work of the artist".<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere Cassirer observes, "This cultivation, this culture of the sensible world constitutes a basic moment and a basic task of the spirit".<sup>19</sup> Later, in the same work, he says that the task of the artist is to join things opposed : "he seeks the 'invisible' in the 'visible', the 'intelligible' in the 'sensible'."<sup>20</sup>

The vision of the unity of the intelligible and the sensible, of the redemption or fulfilment, so to speak, of the one in the other, was integral to Renaissance thought. The thought and works of Leonardo da Vinci, who was a living example of the Renaissance ideal of encyclopaedic knowledge, as also of the dictum that "the artist is as

much a discoverer as the scientist," demonstrate that constant striving after the unification of the intelligible and the sensible that Cassirer defines as the supreme task of the artist. The concept of art as a mirror, as interpreted by Leonardo, may also be helpful as Cassirer has shown,<sup>21</sup> in understanding the tragic vision of Shakespeare who uses that metaphor of the mirror in *Hamlet*, III.2.25, as already mentioned. The impersonality, strict neutrality and perfect transparency of the clear mirror can be seen in Shakespeare's treatment of life, the material of his art, in his tragedies. Material passions, i.e., the passions in real life, rise like dark, ungovernable and impenetrable forces from the level below the conscious: they are necessarily unintelligible. The power they exercise in life is commensurate with their unintelligibility. In actual life they are, in other words, *felt* only, never *seen*. In art, as in Shakespeare's tragedies, they are *seen*, rather than felt. They are not experienced with that disastrous incoherence which we know to our cost in real life. In the *Hamlet* passage (III. 2.23-26) Shakespeare uses the term "image":

"...the purpose of playing whose end, both at the first and now, was and is", Hamlet explains, "...to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own *image*.....". But the *image* of passion, as Cassirer points out, is not the passion itself. "The poet who represents a passion does not infect us with this passion".<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare is supremely the poet who does not infect us with the passion he depicts. The power of his portrayal must not be confused with the power these passions may seem to have over the characters as we watch them. At the receiving end an immunity is conferred by the dramatic experience: more, perhaps, than by any other form of aesthetic experience. At the other end, i.e., the creative, a more profound force, the moral, is at work, as the mirror of Shakespeare's art reveals the *character* of these passions. Dark and turbid passions are given a transparency they lack in real life. The superb power which *creates* this transparency, which gives to the darkest and most mysterious forces at work in the human world a hard, bright, bejewelled surface, warm and vivid with colour and form and life, implies *not* sympathy, but *judgment*. The impersonal vision of the great artist penetrates to the nature and essence of emotions which bring about disasters almost of a cosmic magnitude. In this relentlessly penetrating and, necessarily, unforgiving, because totally

comprehending, vision Shakespeare is at one with Leonardo. What can be inferred from that stray and, to all appearances, thoroughly impersonal utterance about art holding the mirror up to nature, and, more justifiably, from his practice as a dramatist, his mode of creating character, is, as Cassirer observes, "in complete agreement with the conception of the fine arts of the great painters and sculptors of the Renaissance. He would have subscribed to the words of Leonardo da Vinci that 'saper vedere' is the highest gift of the artist."<sup>22</sup> His total identification with his characters, good and bad alike, his "negative capability", as Keats called it, is evidence of the supreme privilege of the maker, the constant exercise of a dispassionate understanding, the kind of detachment with which God alone may be presumed to regard his own creations. There is infinite understanding without compassion. Or, perhaps, only in infinity can compassion and understanding coincide. Such is the relentless urge of creation that impels a great artist to become wholly absorbed in form-making, and in nothing else.

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NOTES & REFERENCES

1. See *Selections from the Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* ed. Irma A Richter (World's Classics), pp. 111-112 (Section IV : "The Arts", Subsection I. I (b) : "The Eye", prgs. 6 & 7).
2. See Erwin Panofsky : *Problems in Titian, mostly iconographic*, p. 93.
3. The illustration is reproduced in André Chastel's *The Age of Humanism* (London, 1963), p. 27.
4. See in this connection E. F. Rice : *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 106-23.
5. School of Fontainebleau. Pl. 304 in *Encyclopaedia of World Art* (Mc Graw-Hill, London, 1964), Vol. IX.
- Panofsky's interpretation of the mirror in Titian's picture, *A Young Girl Doing Her Hair* is referred to in "Time, Helen & Cleopatra : A Note on Antony & Cleopatra, V. ii. 294-5 & 308-9" (*Presidency College Magazine*, 1974).
6. This deeper meaning of the term, akin to that of the other, "Reformation", suggesting a common urge, amounts to a message or, at least, an expectation of salvation. The notion of renewal of life, outer and inner, of nature and of spirit, is reflected in the affinity of terms like *renascor*, *renovare*, *reformare* etc. They all seem to point to a seminal idea of the Renaissance : the possibility, almost infinite, of a renewal of form or transformation.
7. As in Raphael's *Madonna del Cardellino* (Uffizi), "with the children equally disposed on either side of the seated Virgin and the whole composition based on an equilateral triangle". (Wolfflin, *Classic Art*, p. 84).

8. See E. H. Gombrich : *The Story of Art* (Phaidon Press, 1954), p. 234. See also Gombrich's lecture entitled "Psycho-Analysis & the History of Art" included in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (Phaidon Press, 1963), p. 35.

9. *Selections from Notebooks*, ed. cit., Section IV, Subsection II ("Comparison of the Arts : Painting, Music and Poetry"), p. 194.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 195. See also p. 218.

11. E. Panofsky : *Studies in Iconology*, Ch. VI. p. 182.

12. On these lines Hopkins remarks : "...the thought is of beauty as of something that can be physically kept and lost and by physical things only, like keys...". *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* selected by W. H. Gardner (Penguin Poets), p. 52 and p. 231 (Editor's Notes).

13. *Selections from Notebooks*, ed. cit. p. 197. It is interesting to compare the argument of St. 2., *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, regarding the beauty of the images depicted on the urn.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

16. Ernst Cassirer : *An Essay on Man* (Yale University Press, 1944), Ch. IX, p. 143.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

19. Ernst Cassirer : *The Individual & the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, tr. Mario Domandi (Oxford, 1963), Ch. IV., p. 133.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

21. E. Cassirer : *An Essay on Man*. p. 147.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

## RELATIVE SPIRIT

*Walter Pater and Nineteenth Century British Philosophy*

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JASODHARA BAGCHI

### I

A survey of the mid-nineteenth century philosophical scene in Britain elucidates the intellectual bearing of Pater's critical standpoint. The close correspondence between Pater's criticism and the philosophy current in his time has been noticed by at least two major studies of his works.<sup>1</sup> But what has not been emphasized is the conformity of Pater's criticism to the liberal ideology of the 'relative' that dominated the mid-Victorian society. The late fifties and the sixties of the nineteenth century, when Pater was getting equipped as a critic, saw a natural coming together of the Millian empiricism, Positivism and Darwinism on the one hand and the Hegelian revival in England on the other. This resulted in a consolidation of the 'liberal' culture of the English ruling classes in the fifties, sixties and the seventies of the nineteenth century. What brought about the consolidation was a distinct shift from the transcendentalism that characterised the socially disturbed decades of the Romantics and the early Victorians to an exclusive subjection to the world of observed phenomena that characterised the relative stability of the mid-Victorian culture. A bird's-eye view of the philosophical scene in the mid-Victorian England brings out the ideological thrust of this buoyant empiricism, which was strong enough to slur over the differences between varied and often contradictory schools of philosophy current at the time.

Pater's 'liberal' aestheticism that is epitomised by his formulation of the 'relative spirit' belongs to this synthesized ideology of the 'relative'. Pater's overriding concern for the 'relative' spirit is best understood as a conscious intellectual response to this particular trend in contemporary philosophy.



## II

As Pater's biographers point out with varying degrees of emphasis, Pater's coming to Oxford in 1859 coincided with a crisis in his faith. He lost the comfortable refuge of the deep religious fervour which appears to have marked his school-days and became open to the new ideas that were circulating. The moment was a propitious one. The Oxford that Pater went up to was still vibrant with the intellectual energy released by the bitter conflict between the Tractarians and the liberals. By 1850 the liberals had clearly won a victory and the intellectual climate favoured philosophical speculation rather than the theological fervour which had caused havoc in the life of the University in the recent past. Pater's friend Mark Pattison, whose contribution lent considerable prestige to the liberal *Essays and Reviews* (1860), however, writing on 'Philosophy at Oxford' for the opening volume of *Mind* in 1876, acknowledges a debt to Newman for indirectly fostering the spirit of philosophy in the University. Talking of the 'limitations of Newman's religious thought' he says.

But it *is* thought, for it inquires. It inquires, indeed, not into truth, but some propositions being assumed true, it desires a quasi-philosophical representation of them in the intellect. Anyhow intelligence is at work upon the mental content. This was the service Dr. Newman rendered to philosophy in Oxford.<sup>3</sup>

The Oxford that Pater came into was waking up to a new spurt of philosophical activity which was largely due to a revival of Hegelianism and which culminated in the three significant contributions listed by Mark Pattison in the essay mentioned above—these were, Jowett's critical introductions, analysis and translation of Plato's *Dialogues*, Green's long critical introduction to his edition of Hume and Wallace's *Prolegomena* to the *Logic* of Hegel.

Apart from the special significance of that particular moment, it was only to be expected that philosophy should have a special interest for Pater. The school of *Litterae Humaniores* to which Pater belonged both as an undergraduate and as a teacher, was specially responsive to the current developments in philosophy. 'With all its drawbacks', writes an anonymous writer for *Macmillans Magazine* in 1869, 'the school of *Litterae Humaniores* is justly regarded as the true strength of Oxford'.<sup>4</sup> The writer then refers more specifically to the liberal phase of Oxford.

Then when the isolation of Oxford was broken down, and under the life-giving breath of Continental thought the thing of dust began to move after the fashion of a man, it was in the *Literae Humaniores* that each fresh influence made itself felt ; in the bright and teeming life of Greece it seemed as if every aspiration of the new world was reflected. How could men have looked so long upon antiquity as a dead aggregate of books ? How could they have found no meaning in the things that its prophets, its philosophers, poets and historians had spoken ?<sup>4</sup>

A fairly recent survey of Victorian Oxford which appears to have examined the relevant source materials with considerable care, makes similar claims for the impact of liberalising tendencies around 1850 on the discipline of Classics.

Deriving in part from the great tide of preferment and reinforcing the liberal tendency among the younger men, were important changes in the Greats School, which still held unchallenged primacy among Oxford studies. For twenty years or more the philosophical element in the Greats School had been steadily increasing in importance..... In the generation before 1850 the University Curriculum had gradually taken cognizance of the new branches of learning which had grown up outside, the Oxford philosophy had caught up with intellectual currents from which it had been formerly isolated. Sir William Hamilton had enjoyed a vogue in the Schools and then Oxford studies in Aristotle had been put on a scientific basis by contact with German philology. All these changes were given vivid prominence by the Examination Statutes of 1850.<sup>5</sup>

As far as it is possible to trace, given the absence of any really illuminating biographical material for this period of his life, Pater appears to have gathered the tools for his future criticism largely from the readings in philosophy and history which the discipline of *Literae Humaniores* threw open to him. From the beginning Pater appears to have been no merely conventional good student of Classics, looking back wistfully to the glories of the past. He was, rather, interested in participating in the current philosophical issues that he could show to be of living interest to his own time. In a letter to Hermann Diels, answering his query about Pater, Ingram Bywater, who knew Pater intimately as an under-graduate at Queen's College, pays a glowing tribute to the quality of aliveness in Pater.

We attended the same lectures and were in every way inseparable. His mind was much more mature than mine and he completely subjugated me by his verve and originality of view.<sup>6</sup> Bywater further testifies to Pater's conscious effort to keep himself abreast of the contemporary intellectual developments.

As an undergraduate... he devoured all the serious literature of the period. Carlyle, Ruskin, Browning, J. S. Mill and also our older writers, Berkeley and Hume. He managed also to learn in a vacation enough German to read Hegel in the original.<sup>7</sup>

As a young tutor at Brasenose, too, Pater acquired quite a reputation for being in touch with modern trends in philosophical thinking. A belated product of the Oxford Movement, young Gerard Manley Hopkins reacted sharply against this aspect of Pater, who coached him in 1866. An entry in his Journal says, 'Pater spoke for two hours against Xtianity'.<sup>8</sup>

A more enthusiastic response was that of T. Humphry Ward quoted by A. C. Benson.

Then, I suppose about May 1867 came his first lectures. Only six or eight Brasenose men were then reading for classical Greats... We were six men, some novices, some dull, all quite unprepared for Pater. He sat down and began— it was the "History of Philosophy". We expected the old formula about Thales, and some references to Aristotle that we could take down in our books and use for the Schools. It was nothing of the kind. It was a quickly delivered discourse, rather Comtian, on the Dogmatic and Historical Methods; quite new to me, and worse than new to some others. I remember, as we went out, a senior man F—, who used to amaze us by his ready translations of Thucydides in 'Mods' lectures, and who passed as extremely clever as he was in that line— F. threw down his note-book with the cry, "No more of that for me: if Greats mean *that* I'll cut 'em!" (as he wisely did).<sup>9</sup>

Pater's intellectual milieu extended, in a significant way, beyond the walls of Oxford. While Oxford was belatedly sending out feelers towards a full-scale English adaptation of Hegel's philosophy, the influence of which was already beginning to dwindle in its birthplace, English philosophy was being vigorously kept alive in the pages of periodicals. It is not without significance that it is in *The*

*Westminster Review* and in *The Fortnightly Review* that Pater's early writings came out. Pater's approach to literature as a critic was intimately bound up with his special reading of philosophy. Unlike almost any of the major literary writers of his time, with the exception of George Eliot, Pater was actually drawing upon some of the technicalities of contemporary developments in philosophy. The extent and quality of Pater's intellectual engagement in the world of philosophy may be gauged from the first essay that he published. It was a long review article called 'Coleridge's Writings' published in *The Westminster Review*. Though Pater's biographer Thomas Wright, somewhat characteristically, dismisses the essay in a silly parenthesis, Ingram Bywater recognises in it a fitting culmination of Pater's earlier intellectual preparation, and he claims it 'took the cultivated world by storm'.<sup>10</sup> There is the faintly belligerent zeal of a neophyte in the tone of the essay, which is not usual in Pater's writings and the obviously polemical tone and content did not meet with the approval of Pater in his maturer years.<sup>11</sup> But the essay stands as a proof of how carefully Pater had read and interpreted contemporary philosophy and of the way Pater's notion of literary criticism may be said to stem from his participation in the contemporary philosophical scene.

### III

The proper spirit of criticism, as Pater never tires of telling his readers, is the 'relative spirit'. In the very first essay Pater identifies the 'relative' with the 'modern' spirit and gives a memorable description of the working of the 'relative spirit'. It is a *tour de force* and should be kept before our eyes in this discussion of the nature of Pater's philosophical awareness :

Modern thought is distinguished from ancient by its cultivation of the 'relative' spirit in place of the 'absolute'... . To the modern spirit nothing is or can be rightly known except relatively under conditions...the idea of the 'relative' has been fecundated in modern times by the influence of the sciences of observation. These sciences reveal types of life evanescent into each other by inexpressible refinements of change ... A faculty for truth is a power of distinguishing and fixing delicate and fugitive details. The moral world is ever in contact with the physical ; the 'relative' spirit has invaded moral philosophy from the ground of the induc-

tive sciences ... Hard and abstract moralities are yielding to a more exact estimate of the subtlety and complexity of our life. Always as an organism increases in perfection the conditions of its life become more complex. Man is the most complex of the products of nature. Character merges into temperament, the nervous system refines itself into intellect. His physical organism is played upon not only by the physical conditions about it, but by remote laws of inheritance, the vibrations of long past acts reaching him in the new order of things in which he lives. When we have estimated these conditions, he is not yet simple and isolated; for the mind of the race, the character of the age sway him this way or that through the medium of language and ideas... The truth of these relations experience gives us; not the truth of eternal outlines effected once for all, but a world of fine gradations and subtly linked conditions, shifting intricately as we ourselves change; and bids us by constant clearing of the organs of observation and perfecting of the analysis to make what we can of these. To the intellect, to the critical spirit, these subtleties of effect are more precious than anything else.<sup>1 2</sup>

As this view of the critical spirit, formulated by Pater so early in his life, is a position to which, broadly speaking, he adheres throughout his life, it is important that we should try and place it in its proper intellectual perspective. In this passage we find Pater's imagination being shaped by the demands of naturalism and a resistance to transcendentalism that characterises the climate of post-Coleridgian English philosophy. Pater's choice of Coleridge as the first significant predecessor with whom he enters into relationship of antagonism is a symptom of the liberalism that he acquired as an undergraduate at Oxford. Perhaps one can trace subtle shifts in Pater's attitude to his society and its institutions, but in his philosophical formulation Pater holds fast to his appeal to the phenomenal world which constitutes the basic staple of his liberal standpoint. For this reason he conceives of the 'relative' in opposition to the 'absolute', a much-hated word in nineteenth century vocabulary, which Pater uses to denote any approach inimical to the concreteness of the physical world and to the world of sensation. Whatever one may say about the growing conservatism of Pater as a senior member of Brasenose College, his intellectual opposition to the 'absolute' he maintained throughout. He maintains the same degree of hostility

towards it in his late work *Plato and Platonism* as he did in his first published writing :

Hereafter, in every age, some will be found to start afresh quixotically, through what a waste of words : in search of that true substance the one, the Absolute, which to the majority of acute people is after all but zero, and a mere algebraic symbol for nothingness.<sup>13</sup>

In philosophical terms this hostility is an antipathy towards metaphysical abstraction. In his 'Coleridge' essay Pater is much more blatant about it :

To suppose that what is called 'ontology' is what the speculative instinct seeks is the misconception of a backward school of logicians ... A transcendentalism that makes what is abstract more excellent than what is concrete has nothing akin to the leading philosophies of the world.<sup>14</sup>

In *Plato and Platonism* he is not so obviously partisan, but his objection to metaphysics still remains and is barely concealed :

By one and all it is assumed, in the words of Plato, that to be colourless, formless, impalpable is the note of the superior grade of knowledge and existence, evanescent steadily, as one ascends towards that perfect (perhaps not quite attainable) condition of either which in truth can only be attained by the suppression of all the rule and outline of one's own actual experience and thought.<sup>15</sup>

The area chosen by Pater is the palpable world of form and colour, the defined world of concrete human experience and sensation in which the appropriate mode of assessment is the relative. This preference for the concreteness of the 'relative' over the abstractions of the 'absolute' approach of metaphysics Pater had derived from a careful response to the current mood in philosophical thinking. We get a clear notion of this from David Masson's mid-nineteenth century survey *Recent British Philosophy*, where Masson talks about the contemporary philosophical attitudes towards Metaphysics :

But Metaphysics is a terrible bugbear of a word in these days. You know the popular definition : When A talks to B, and B does not know what A is saying, and A himself does not very well know either, but both B and A keep up the pretence and nod to

each other wisely through the fog—that is Metaphysics. We are all dearly in love with Physics : but we cannot abide the Meta prefixed to them.<sup>16</sup>

Writing as a neophyte, it is against the presence of Metaphysics in Coleridge that young Pater takes his stand : for him Metaphysics was merely a submission to a rigid and immutable Absolute, an idea which Pater considers as running against the major philosophical trends acceptable to his own generation. This is his main charge against Coleridge :

The literary life of Coleridge was a disinterested struggle against the application of the relative spirit to moral and religious questions. Everywhere he is restlessly scheming to apprehend the absolute ; to affirm it effectively ; to get it acknowledged....<sup>17</sup>

Leaving the question of judging the rightness or wrongness of this to a different occasion, we should try and understand the full force of what Pater means by the 'relative' spirit. I suggest that the dominant tendency of the philosophy of Pater's time is best characterised by this very term, which Pater adopts almost as a motto of his criticism. With this one key distinction between the 'relative' and the 'absolute' he goes, as I hope to show, to the heart of one of the most significant trends in the philosophy of this age.

David Masson's useful survey, covering the field up to the middle of the 1860's, shows a six-fold division in the philosophy current at the time. The entire range extends, according to Masson, from the total nihilism of Hume to the dogmatic Absolutism of Spinoza.<sup>18</sup> Of the six divisions the two in the middle were clearly the most influential : Sir William Hamilton and John Stuart Mill were the two philosophers who made the most serious attempt at a workable compromise between the dissolution of unqualified empiricism and an *a priori* faith in the Absolute. It was Sir William Hamilton's article on the Philosophy of the Unconditioned in *The Edinburgh Review* in October 1829 that launched this full-scale vindication of the relative spirit. Sir William Hamilton declared the impossibility of philosophising about the unconditioned ; philosophical speculation could only be conducted relatively and under conditions.

In this article Sir William Hamilton used the occasion of reviewing Victor Cousin's *Cours de Philosophie* to propound his own system

which came to dominate a large part of nineteenth century philosophical thinking. He said in a crucial passage :

In our opinion, the mind can conceive, and consequently can know, only the limited, and the conditionally limited. The unconditionally unlimited, or the Infinite, the unconditionally limited, or the Absolute, cannot positively be construed to the mind ; they can be conceived, only by thinking away from, or abstractions of, those very conditions under which thought itself is realised.... The unconditioned negation, and the unconditional affirmation of limitation ; in other words, the infinite and the absolute, properly so called, are thus equally inconceivable to us.

Or again :

Philosophy, if viewed as more than a science of the conditioned, is impossible. Departing from the particular, we admit, that we can never, in our highest generalisations, rise above the finite, that our knowledge, whether of mind or matter, can be nothing more than a knowledge of the relative manifestations of an existence.<sup>19</sup>

Sir William Hamilton traces in Cousin the ghost of the 'Absolute' which has continued to haunt the German metaphysicians in spite of Kant, who, he says, 'had slain the body, but 'had not exorcised the spectre of the Absolute...'. Not content with the image (or perhaps the lack of it) of a 'spectre' Hamilton bursts out in a mythic image : 'but the absolute, like the water in the sieve of Danaides, has hitherto run through as a negative into the abyss of nothing'.<sup>20</sup> It is the negation of manifest reality leading to the void of nothingness that the philosophical mood of nineteenth century England abhorred, and wooing of the 'Absolute' by Metaphysics was especially repellant because it betrayed the concrete fullness of actual existence to the unknown negation of the Infinite. In the words of Hamilton again,

To reach the point of indifference by abstraction we annihilate the object and by abstraction we annihilate the subject, of consciousness. But what remains ? —Nothing ... We then hypostatise the zero ; we baptise it with the name of Absolute, and conceit ourselves that we contemplate Absolute existence when we only speculate absolute privation.<sup>21</sup>

John Stuart Mill in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* praises Hamilton for contributing to this important aspect of nineteenth century British philosophy :



The doctrine which is thought to belong in the most especial manner, and which was the ground of his opposition to the transcendentalism of the later French and German metaphysicians is that which he and others have called the Relativity of Human Knowledge. It is the subject of the most generally known and most impressive of all his writings, the one which first revealed to the English metaphysical reader that a new power had arisen in philosophy ; and, together with its developments, it composes the 'Philosophy of the Conditioned' ; which he opposed to the German and French philosophies of the Absolute, and which is regarded by most of his admirers as the greatest of his titles to a permanent place in the history of metaphysical thought.<sup>22</sup>

By emphasising the significance of the 'relative' Hamilton was paving the way for what Mill himself called the 'experiential' approach to the world. It is the 'relative' spirit, once again, that Mill welcomes in the Positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte. Mill's balanced appraisal, 'The Positive Philosophy of Comte', in *The Westminster Review* mentions one of the most significant aspects of the reception of Positivist philosophy in England—the fact that it found a natural soil in England because it adhered to the most dominant tendency of the day, the 'relative' spirit. Mill summarises the basic position of Comte's philosophy as follows :

The fundamental doctrine of a true philosophy, according to M. Comte, and the character by which he defines Positive Philosophy, is the following :—we have no knowledge of anything but phaenomena ; and our knowledge of phaenomena is relative, not absolute...

Mill then gives a neat history of this line of thinking in the general history of English philosophy, thereby establishing some of the links between his own school of Utilitarianism and that of Positivism through their commonly shared history of philosophical ideas :

The true doctrine...was probably first conceived in its entire generality by Hume, who carries it a step further than Comte, maintaining not merely that the only causes of phaenomena which can be known to us are other phaenomena, their invariable antecedents, but that there is no other kind of causes ; cause, as he interprets it, means the invariable antecedent. This is the only part of Hume's doctrine which was contested by his great

adversary, Kant ; who maintaining as strenuously as Comte that we know nothing of things in themselves, of Noumena, of real Substances and real Causes, yet peremptorily asserted their existence... Among the direct successors of Hume, the writer who has best stated and defended Comte's fundamental doctrine is Dr. Thomas Brown...the same great truth formed the ground-work of all the speculative philosophy of Bentham, and pre-eminently of James Mill : and Sir William Hamilton's famous doctrine of the Relativity of human knowledge has guided many to it...

The foundation of M. Comte's philosophy is thus in no way peculiar to him, but the general property of the age, however far as yet from being universally accepted even by thoughtful minds.<sup>23</sup>

What Mill called the 'general property of the age' was a renewed awareness of the importance of observed phenomena to which the single most important contributory factor was science. Mid-nineteenth century English philosophy increasingly felt the urgent need to come to an understanding with science. The urgency is expressed rather quaintly by David Masson in the survey mentioned earlier :

Every generation, every year, brings with it a quantum of new scientific conceptions, new scientific truths. They creep in upon us on all sides. Is philosophy to stand in the midst of them haughtily and superciliously, taking no notice ? She cannot do so and live. Whether she knows it or not, these are her appointed food. She must eat them up or perish.<sup>24</sup>

Needless to say, philosophy in the nineteenth century, already favourably disposed towards the significance of observed phenomena, found an ally rather than an enemy in science. The implications of Darwin's evolutionary theory were favourable to the prevailing 'relative spirit' in nineteenth century English philosophy. It became increasingly difficult to hold on to a metaphysical faith in man's ontological uniqueness<sup>25</sup> and a more 'relative' approach was appropriate to the notion of man and society as something evolving, developing. Evolution as a concept, therefore, fitted in beautifully with 'development', a theme that enjoyed considerable prestige among nineteenth century thinkers. It countered effectively what the nineteenth century considered to be a static rigidity in eighteenth century rationalism by introducing a new perspective of man and society as

something moving and developing.<sup>26</sup> Darwinism was quickly absorbed in the general picture of an evolving humanity. It made science acceptable to the righteous-minded intellectuals of the day. A telling illustration may be found in W. H. Mallock's *The New Republic*, that mid-Victorian storehouse of the current stock notions of the day. It occurs in the sermon preached by Dr. Jenkinson, a fictionalised version of Benjamin Jowett :

I just touch in passing upon this doctrine that we popularly call Darwinism, because it is the most familiar example to us of the doctrine of evolution. But the point which I am wishing to emphasise is not the outward evolution of man, but the inward, of which however, the former is an image and a likeness. This theory of moral evolution I wish to point out to you is alike the Christian and the scientific theory; and I thus wish you to see that the very points in which science seems most opposed to Christianity are really those in which it most fundamentally agrees with it.<sup>27</sup>

Mallock's parody is based on a subtle exaggeration of proportions, but his basic ingredients faithfully represent the dominant trends of thought in the mid-nineteenth century English intellectual scene. This peculiarly high-minded liberal attempt to blend the apparently opposed demands of science and religion<sup>28</sup> ultimately led to a combination that gave a unique flavour to English philosophy in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Hegelianism and Darwinism, the two major trends of thinking, came together to safeguard the superior moral development of man in a world in which the hold of a more orthodox kind of religion was getting loosened.

Hegelianism first arrived in England as an antidote to Darwin and to any form of 'positive' philosophy. Darwin's theory was at first repugnant to the religious thinkers of the day, who considered it a sacrilege against the sacred origin of man. Some of them found refuge in Hegel's Ontological view of the world and felt encouraged by Hegel's contempt for the empirical sciences to carry on a vigorous combat against the degrading influence of science. In the earliest English exposition of Hegel's philosophy, *The Secret of Hegel* (1865), J. H. Stirling ridicules Darwin and 'positive' tendencies in contemporary thought with a vehemence that can only be matched by Carlyle;

As regards the unfriendly "advanced thinkers" who denounce the Idealism and Jargon of German Philosophy, this is as it should be... . "There was a time", says Hegel, when a man who did not believe in Ghosts or the Devil was named a Philosopher. But an "advanced thinker" to these distinctions negative of the unseen, adds – what is positive of the seen – an enlightened pride in his father the monkey !...Sink your pedigree as man and adopt for family-tree a procession of the skeletons of monkeys – then superior enlightenment radiates from your very person, and your place is fixed – a place of honour in the acclamant brotherhood that names itself "advanced" !

Stirling then goes on to point out the lamentable situation in England :

So it is in England at present ; this is the acknowledged pinnacle of English thought and English science now. Just point in these days to the picture of some huge baboon, and suddenly before such Enlightenment—superstition is disarmed, priests confess their imposture and the church sinks – beneath the Hippocampus of Gorilla !

Hegel's Idealism was offered by Stirling as a balm to soothe the 'still-vexed' sensibility of the Victorians. Stirling presents Hegel as a great bulwark against the ugly erosions of the human spirit by science :

It is the express mission of Kant and Hegel, in effect, to replace the *negative* of that party by an affirmative : or Kant and Hegel—all but wholly directly both, and one of them quite wholly directly—have no object but to restore Faith—Faith in the Immortality of the Soul and the Freedom of the Will—nay, Faith in Christianity as the Revealed Religion and this too, in perfect harmony with the Right of Private Judgement, and the Rights, or Lights, or Nights of Intelligence in General<sup>29</sup>.

Hegelianism, in its turn, came under a heavy share of ridicule. In defying the law of contradictions Hegel was considered to topple the very claims of Reason itself. In his extremely Positivist *Biographical History of Philosophy* George Henry Lewes, for instance, does not conceal his attitude towards "Hegel's method" :

As a display of perverse ingenuity, stolidly convinced of its entire seriousness and importance, as an example of unhesitating

confidence in the validity of verbal distinctions – the philosophy of Hegel has perhaps never been equalled. As Dr. Ott epigrammatically remarks, “Ici l’absurdité se pose comme méthode fondamentale”<sup>80</sup>.

The identity of contraries which Hegel propounded threatened to topple the fundamental logical structure of all philosophical thinking. As late as 1882 William James wrote from Cambridge, Massachusetts, a virulent attack on what he called ‘Some Hegelisms’. In this article James gave an imaginary account of how Hegel might have resolved the problem of the muddle and incoherence of existence in his confrontation with the universe :

But hark ! What monstrous strain is this that steals upon his ear ? Incoherence itself, may it not be the very sort of coherence I require ? Muddle, is it anything but a peculiar sort of transparency ? Is not jolt passage ? Is friction other than a kind of lubrication ? Is not chasm a filling ? A queer kind of filling but a filling still. Why seek for glue to hold things together when their very falling apart is the only glue you need ? Let all that negation which seemed to disintegrate the universe be the mortar that combines it, and the problem stands solved.

The paradoxical character of the notion could not fail to please a mind monstrous even in its native Germany, where mental excess is endemic. Richard, for a moment brought to bay, is himself again. He vaults into the saddle, and from that time his career is that of a philosophic desperado, one series of outrages upon the chastity of thought.<sup>81</sup>

Heavily satirical though this account is, there is yet a grain of perception in it which might help us to understand why Hegelianism came to be so widely accepted in the philosophical scene. Hegelianism, by trying to incorporate the ‘negative’ into its system, did give a recognition to what William James calls the ‘muddle and incoherence’ of man’s existence that was quite unprecedented in the history of metaphysics as nineteenth century England viewed it.

Hegelianism came and stayed not because it went against the empirical tendency of Pater’s time, but rather because it confirmed it. This is brought home again and again by the kind of emphasis with which the English Hegelians advocate their philosophy. It is true that they felt that science and the ‘Positive’ philosophy had

denuded the world of much of its glory, but they also felt that the vacuum could not be filled by an abstract entity whose very foundation was a denial of the actual world of experience. Caird describes the situation in his book on Hegel as follows :

The scientific sense, which has gradually communicated itself even to many of those who are not scientific, forces us to see in particular things not ideals but merely examples of general classes, and to regard them all as connected to each other by laws of necessary relation, in such a way that they are *ipso facto* deprived of any exceptional or independent position.... Zeus is dethroned, and Vortex reigns in his place.<sup>82</sup>

But against this centrifugal tendency of science Caird does not offer a static Being who would keep everything in rigid order :

To find an object of reverence, we must be able in some way or another to rise to an original source of life, out of which this manifold existence flows, and which in all its variety and change, never forgets or loses itself.... Then we have found that the multiplicity of forms, the endless series of appearances, will begin to take an ideal meaning, because we shall see in them the Protean masks of Being, which is never absolutely hidden, but in the perishing of one form and coming of another is ever more fully revealing itself. It is by this suggestion of such self-revealing unity that Goethe at a touch gives poetic life to the picture of change which modern science has set before us :

In the floods of life, in the storm of deeds,  
Up and down I fly,  
Hither, thither weave,  
From birth to grave,  
An endless weft,  
A changing sea,  
Of glowing life.  
Thus in the whistling loom of time I ply  
Weaving the living robe of Deity.<sup>83</sup>

It is this living touch of reality which the empiricists had felt was lacking in metaphysics that the Hegelians appear to have cherished. The inertia of Kant's Pure Reason was hurled aside by the movement of Hegel's dialectics and an easy passage between the world of Ideas

and the world of Nature was re-established. As Caird says about Hegel :

For him it was necessary to show that the kingdom of nature and spirit are one, in spite of all their antagonism ; nay it was necessary for him to show that this antagonism itself is the manifestation of their unity...what had been regarded as absolute opposites or contradictories, mind and matter, spirit and nature, self-determination and determination by the not-self, must be united and reconciled, and that not by an external harmony, but by bringing out into distinct consciousness the unity that lies beyond their differences and gives it its meaning. To do this indeed, was to break with all the ideas of logical method that had hitherto ruled the schools.<sup>84</sup>

It is in a very similar way that Muirhead retrospectively analysed the coming of Hegel into England. Typically, however, he sees the coming of Hegel as an antidote to the general sense of alienation which had been brought in by Hume's so-called nihilism :

The malady of the age of which Hume's philosophy was the completest expression was the separation of subject from object, the ideal from the real, the individual from society, the finite from the infinite. What was needed was a rational philosophy that should reunite what reason had divided, reclothe what it had destroyed...<sup>85</sup>

According to Muirhead it was precisely this 'rational philosophy' that Hegel provided.

What is misleading about this antithesis between Hume's extreme empiricism and the idealism of Hegel is that it takes our eyes off the extent to which the new Hegelianism made its appeal to experience. Hegelian dialectics admitted a fluidity which has not been permissible in the rigid immutability of Kant's world of Ideas. One of the main reasons why Hegelianism could overcome much of the initial resistance from the empirical schools of thinking is that, like them, it tried to interpret the world not in Absolute but in relative terms. An illustration of this aspect of English Hegelianism may be found in the beautifully written *Prolegomena* which Pater's friend William Wallace added to his own translation of Hegel's *Logic*. Contrasting Hegel's attitude to the Absolute with that of the others, Wallace says :

As a result of the criticism by Kant, Jacobi claimed the Absolute for Faith : and Spencer banishes the Absolute to the sphere of Religion to be worshipped or ignored, but in either case blindly. Hegel, on the contrary, purposes to show that this unfathomable Absolute is very near us, and at our very door : in our hands, as it were, and especially present in our every day language. If we are ever to gain the Absolute, we must be careful not to lose one jot or tittle of the Relative. The Absolute—this term which is to some so offensive and to others so precious—always presents itself to us a Relative... It is a great step when we have detected the Relativity of what had hitherto seemed Absolute,—when a new aspect of the infinite fullness of the spiritual world, the truth of God, dawns upon us.<sup>86</sup>

'Infinite fullness', one might say, is the operative phrase here. Hegelianism was given the special welcome in England in the second half of the nineteenth century, because it was seen as the philosophy of a dynamic 'developing' world, committed to the varied fluid world of actuality ; to quote the words of Wallace again :

What he intended to accomplish with detail and regular evolution was not a system of principle in these departments of action only, but a theory of thought which also manifests itself in Art, Science and Religion, in all the consciousness of ordinary life, and in the movement of the world. Philosophy ranges over the whole field of actuality, or existing fact. Abstract principles are all very well in their way, but they are not philosophy. If the world in its historical and its present life develops into endless detail in regular lines, Philosophy must equally develop the narrowness of its first principles into the plentitude of a system.<sup>87</sup>

The 'plentitude of a system'<sup>88</sup> is what English Hegelianism brought into the speculative world, and it was because of its emphasis on expanse and variety that it could happily assimilate other apparently antagonistic modes of thought such as Positivism and Darwinism. The idea of 'development' which was the special *forte* of nineteenth century thought in general, provided a meeting ground for Hegel and Darwin. A clear example of how the two blended in the nineteenth century mind is an article by D. G. Ritchie called 'Darwin and Hegel' which was read before the Aristotelian Society around 1891. A convinced Hegelian, Ritchie says :



In the present age the most conspicuously advancing science is biology ; and the categories of organism and evolution are freely transferred to philosophy with the great advantage of lifting it out of the more abstract conception of mathematics or mechanics....<sup>88</sup>

Thus Hegel and Darwin combined to rescue the nineteenth century mind from the rigid eighteenth century world-view dominated by Newtonian mechanics. What Hegel and Darwin had in common was a recognition that the world they had to explain was not a static one, it was moving and developing. Ritchie is aware of the basic difference between Darwin and Hegel, but he emphasises the similarity rather than the difference : 'Hegel's development (Entwicklung) is not a time-process but a thought-process ; yet Hegel's method of exposition is such that the thought-process is apt to be read as if it were meant to be a time-process...' Ritchie expands the theme at greater length a little later :

Above all in the history of philosophy does the connection between the thought-process and the time-process come to the surface. The history of philosophy gave Hegel his clue to the logical development of the categories. The simpler and more abstract categories come first in time in the process by which human consciousness becomes gradually aware of the conceptions underlying ordinary thought and language. In the history of Philosophy we have a development from the simpler to the more complex, like that which Evolutionists see in the physical universe. Professor Wallace has well compared Hegel's discovery of the self-development of thought by means of the clue given him in the history of philosophy to Darwin's discovery of the process of evolution in the organic world by the help of the clue given him by artificial selection. "Philosophy", says Professor Wallace, "is to the general growth of intelligence what artificial breeding is to the variation of species under natural conditions"<sup>89</sup>.

#### IV

This bird's eye view of mid-nineteenth century English philosophy, though highly selective, gives us an indication of the intellectual setting for Pater's critical method. An unorthodox participant in the philosophical thinking of his time, Pater's basic position in criticism was a direct outcome of this essentially liberal philosophical

endeavour to establish a bridge between the apparently contradictory claims of physical nature and the inner sources of man's superior moral nature. Pater's initial formulation of the 'relative spirit' which I cited and discussed is just such an attempt to approach man's inner life as an exact parallel to physical nature and its intricate changes. The relative spirit remains the central formula of Pater's criticism throughout his life – possibly there is a slight shift away from his youthful enthusiasm for a total commitment to the changeableness of physical nature towards a growing emphasis on man's relationship with the comparatively more stable aspects of human society and its institutions. But there is nothing in the nature of a 'recantation' in the writings of Pater as far as the commitment to the 'relative' is concerned.<sup>40</sup>

Pater's life-long admiration for the Heraclitean way of thinking is an indication of this commitment. His third published essay, 'The poetry of William Morris', contained a tailpiece which was later incorporated in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* as its once notorious *Conclusion* in which he presented human mind and physical nature along with the entire social world as perpetually in motion, so that the only viable approach to this spectacle is the 'relative' approach. The close analogy between matter and mind which had inspired Pater's championing of the 'relative' spirit in the Coleridge essay is continued here. The passage begins with the striking claim : 'To regard all things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought'.<sup>41</sup> By modern thought Pater clearly has in mind the new kind of challenges faced by English philosophy, to understand the world of human thought as a projection of physical nature and the senses. In the analysis that follows, Pater sees both physical nature and the world of human thought and feeling as in a perpetual flux. The image that Pater himself suggests for conveying this world-view is that of flame :

This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence renewed from moment to moment of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring<sup>42</sup>.

The response that Pater recommends to this ever-renewing world of flux is clearly the artistic response :

A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How can we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life.<sup>43</sup>

Looked at in this way the phrase 'hard gem-like flame' which has since become a byword for the immutability of Aesthetic transcendentalism, yields the very opposite meaning. The sense of motion, which we have seen had invaded mid-nineteenth century English philosophy from the empirical as well as Idealist schools, is captured by Pater in this image of motion in stillness. When, having finished his individual studies in the art and history of the Renaissance, Pater picks out this passage to stand for the conclusion to his book, with a greater awareness of his intellectual debts, he introduces the name of Heraclitus, the Pre-Socratic philosopher of 'motion'.<sup>44</sup>

That Pater derived this acute awareness of the predominance of motion from his reading of contemporary philosophy is spelt out by him in the chapter called 'The Doctrine of Motion' in the series of lectures called *Plato and Platonism* which Pater delivered to a group of young students of philosophy in Oxford. *Plato and Platonism* coming very late in Pater's life contains the most mature expression of Pater's thinking. The chapter on Heraclitus is, therefore, a fair indication of how central the doctrine of motion remained to his philosophical understanding of the world :

.....the most modern metaphysical, and the most modern empirical philosophies alike have illustrated emphatically, justified, expanded, the divination (so we may make bold to call it under the new light now thrown upon it) of the ancient theorist of Ephesus. The entire modern theory of 'development', in all its various phases, proved or unprovable—what is it but old Heracliteanism awake once more in a new world and grown to full proportions?

παντα χωρει παντα ρει — It is the burden of Hegel on the one hand, to whom nature, and art, and polity, and Philosophy, aye, and religion too, each in its long historic series, are but so many conscious moments in the secular process of the eternal-mind ;

and on the other hand of Darwin and Darwinism, for which 'type' itself properly *is* not but is only always becoming... Races, laws, arts, have their origins and end, and are themselves ripples only on the great river of organic life ; and the language is changing on our very lips.<sup>45</sup>

The urgency with which Pater had put forward the need for an artistic response stemmed precisely from this inherent changeableness of life. As he had said in his early essay on Morris 'art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake'.<sup>46</sup> Significantly, these are also the concluding lines of Pater's first published book, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873).

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All references to Pater's works are to the complete works of Walter Pater (London 1901), unless otherwise mentioned. ]

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2. Mark Pattison, 'Philosophy at Oxford', *Mind*, Vol. I, 1876, p. 87.
3. 'Study and Opinion in Oxford', *Macmillan's Magazine*, Vol. 21, Dec. 1869, p. 189.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.
5. W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford* (London 1965), p. 213.
6. W. W. Jackson, *Ingram Bywater : The Memoir of an Oxford Scholar* (Oxford 1917), p. 78.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
8. G. M. Hopkins, *The Journals and Papers of G. M. Hopkins*, ed. Humphry House, completed by Graham Storey (London 1959), p. 138.
9. A. C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London 1906), p. 20.
10. Wright's dismissal occurs in a curt sentence about this article 'which, by the by, has pleased nobody'. Thomas J. Wright, *Walter Pater* (London 1907),

Vol. I, p. 226. Bywater's full tribute to the essay reads as follows : 'All this was in his period of intellectual *Sturm und Drang*, the end of which is marked by his marvellous Essay on Coleridge, which, though anonymous, took the cultivated world by storm'. W. W. Jackson, *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

11. In 1882 when William Sharp wrote to Pater that he had 'discovered and recovered' each article that Pater had written, and sent him the list, Pater replied, 'The list you sent me is complete with the exception of an article on Coleridge in the *Westminster* of January 1866, with much of which, both as to matter and manner I should now be greatly dissatisfied'. William Sharp, *Papers Critical and Reminiscent* (London 1912), p. 209.

12. Walter Pater, 'Coleridge's Writings', an anonymous review of *Conversations, Letters and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge*, ed. Thomas Allsop, *The Westminster Review*, January 1866 (cited hereafter as 'Coleridge's Writings'), pp. 107-8.

13. *Plato and Platonism*, p. 40.

14. 'Coleridge's Writings', p. 108.

15. *Plato and Platonism*, p. 40.

16. David Masson, *Recent British Philosophy* (London 1865), pp. 28-29.

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22. John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London 1865), p. 5.

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25. John Passmore, 'Darwin's impact on British metaphysics', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (September 1959), Darwin Anniversary Issue, pp. 43-44.

26. For a clarification of the issues, see Morse Peckham, 'Darwinism and Darwinisticism', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 1, p. 23.

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29. J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel* (London 1865), p. xii and pp. xxxi-xxxii.

30. G. H. Lewes, *Biographical History of Philosophy* (London 1845), p. 205.

31. William James, 'On Some Hegelisms', *Mind*, Vol. viii, 1882, p. 193.

32. Edward Caird, *Hegel* (London 1863), p. 113.

33. Ibid., p. 114.
34. Ibid., p. 128.
35. J. H. Muirhead 'How Hegel Came to England', *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* (London 1931), pp. 160-161.
36. W. Wallace, 'Prolegomena', *The Logic of Hegel* (Oxford 1874), p. cxlii.
37. Ibid., p. 66.
38. D. G. Ritchie, *Darwin and Hegel, with other Philosophical Studies* (London 1893), p. 41.
39. Ibid., p. 47.
40. There is a popular belief about Pater's hasty retreat into propriety once the alleged immorality of his *Renaissance* had shocked the Victorian public. Pater's withdrawal of the 'Conclusion' in the second edition also produces this impression. When Pater withdrew his essay 'Aesthetic Poetry' from the second and all subsequent editions of *Appreciations* Miss Bradley entered in the Journals she kept jointly with Miss Cooper: "He has struck out the Essay on Aesthetic Poetry in *Appreciations* (for second edition) because it gave offence to some pious person—he is getting hopelessly prudish in literature, and defers to the moral weakness of everybody. Deplorable!" *Journals of Michael Field*, Brit. Mus. Add. MS 46778, fol. 205. Cited in *Letters of Walter Pater*, ed. Lawrence Evans. (Oxford 1970), p. 113, footnote to Letter 188.

But the reason for the second omission may well have been more intrinsic. The Conclusion was restored in the third edition as soon as Pater has satisfied himself that he had spelt out the moral implications of the cryptic *Conclusion* at greater length in *Marius the Epicurean* (*Renaissance*, p. 233). Pater may have had more basic objection against the somewhat overcharged writing in 'Aesthetic Poetry' which may account for its never appearing again.

41. "Poems of William Morris", *The Westminster Review*, Vol. 34 n.s. October 1868, pp. 309-10.
42. Ibid., p. 310.
43. Ibid., p. 311.
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45. *Plato and Platonism*, pp. 19-21.
46. 'Poems of William Morris', p. 312.

## BEN JONSON'S THEORY OF COMEDY

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SUDESHNA CHAKRAVARTY

TO Ben Jonson criticism is an important activity. The true critic is very different from the fashionable censor whom he ridicules in the Prologue to *Every Man Out of his Humour* :

A fellow, that has neither arte nor braine,  
Sit like an Aristarchus, or starke-asse  
Taking mens lines with a tabacco face.<sup>1</sup>

Rather "the office of a true Critick or Censor, is (to)...judge sincerely of the Author, and his matter, which is the signe of solid, and perfect learning in a man."<sup>2</sup> Jonson assigns a great importance to criticism in his works. Of all the Elizabethan dramatists, he is probably the most self-conscious about his art. He has a sound theoretical basis for his art, and throughout his work—in his Epigrammes, Conversations, the inductions and prologues to his plays, as well as in the dramatised portraits of the ideal poet—we find Jonson expounding the critical ideas and principles that lay behind his artistic composition. He is the first to work in theoretical discussions in his plays. Indeed, as Harry Levis justly remarks, "Jonson is commonly conceived as a man who wrote comedies because he had a theory about why comedies should be written."<sup>3</sup> His reputation as comic theorist has been largely responsible for his forbidding, pedantic image.

To understand Jonson's theory of comedy one must turn to the plays themselves—particularly the prologues and inductions—as well as to the remarks scattered through his prose work—*Timber, or Discoveries ; Made upon Men and Matter, as they have flow'd out of his daily readings ; or had their refluxe to his peculiar Notion of the Times*—first published posthumously in the Folio edition of 1640-1. This work, largely composed of jottings and casual observations that occurred to him in the course of his creative activity, is in the nature of a commonplace book. Much of the material is derivative. Modern scholarship has traced borrowings from various classical and

Renaissance sources— Cicero, Petronius, Quintilian, the two Senecas, Erasmus, Machiavelli, Vives, Bacon and others— as well as his immediate preceptor Sidney. Yet the final result is more than a mere compilation. The very choice of material is highly significant, while the pithy, vigorous style gives the book a stamp of originality. *Timber* is not merely a stock book of conventional classical ideas— it gives an illuminating insight into Jonson's personal views on art, into those ideas which he adopted as the guiding principles for his literary activity. He has gleaned from the classical masters some of their basic literary theories and principles of judgement, but, as he himself is going to emphasise repeatedly, he is no servile imitator ; he considers himself at liberty to freely adapt, expand or modify.

The animating motive of his criticism is his conviction that literature in his day is in a bad way, and urgently needs to be salvaged. "Nothing in our Age, I have observed, is more preposterous than the running judgements upon Poetry, and Poets ; when we shall heare those things commended and cry'd up for the best writings, which a man would scarce vouchsafe, to wrap any wholesome drug in ... . A man cannot imagine that thing so foolish, or rude, but will find, and enjoy an Admirer ; at least a Reader or Spectator."<sup>4</sup> The Poetaster is for Jonson a particularly despicable character, and always a target for virulent attack, for in pandering to vulgar taste he is debasing the noblest of professions. The contrast of the false and true poet is one of the recurring themes of Jonsonian Comedy. "Meere Elocution ; or an excellent faculty in verse"— that is, mere technical finesse— cannot make a genuine poet ; he needs to have "the exact knowledge of all vertues, and their Contraries ; with ability to render the one lov'd, the other hated, by his proper embattaling them".<sup>5</sup> The poet is always a moral teacher. Even an early play like *Every Man in his Humour* emphasises the essential difference between the foolishly pretentious poet Matheo and the attractive Lorenzo Junior who is sincerely dedicated to poetry. Matheo must finally be punished with the full weight and vigour of Jonson the Moraliser— his verses must be set on fire. Indeed, the severity of the punishment disturbs the comic tone of the play— one cannot help feeling that the note of harsh invective is incongruous in the context of the genial laughter at the eccentricities of fools and gulls. But the poetaster in Jonson can never expect leniency. Contrasted with Matheo is the impassioned defence of poetry by Lorenzo Junior :



The state of poesie, such as it is,  
 Blessed, eternal, and most true divine.  
 .....fit to be seen  
 Of none but grave and consecrated eyes.

It is "this barren and infected age" which is incapable of distinguishing between "such leane, ignorant and blasted wits" whose "slubberd lines have current passe / From the fat judgements of the multitude" and the "true Poet : than which reverend name / Nothing can more adorne humanitie."<sup>6</sup> The characters in *Every Man in his Humour* are judged by their response to poetry. While Matheo and Bobadilla have a lamentable taste in literature, and Lorenzo Senior is narrow minded-ly prejudiced against all forms of poetry, Doctor Clement, who represents the ethical centre of the play, has a genuine admiration for the true poet and understands his worth. This same theme is developed more elaborately in *The Poetaster*. This play is more than a scurrilous personal attack on some of Jonson's contemporaries. Admittedly, the Poet's War was the immediate reason for its composition. But this is also a play which is deeply concerned with art and its true function in society—hence the contrast that is emphasised between the two poetasters Demetrius and Crispinus and the noble Horace. The Dedicatory Epistle to *Volpone* asserts once more Jonson's main preoccupations—emphasising the seriousness of his aims, his scorn of his contemporaries who were debasing literature by their vulgarity and grossness, his consciousness of his duty as reformer and preserver of the true seriousness of poetry. The writers of his day were abusing the name of poet—"now, especially in dramatick, or (as they term it) stage-poetrie, nothing but ribaldry, profanation, blasphemy, all licence of offence to God, and men, is practised"<sup>7</sup> He holds himself aloof from such baseness, adhering faithfully to "the doctrine, which is the principall end of poesie, to informe men in the best reason of living."<sup>8</sup> To be such a moral teacher, the poet must also be a good man, exemplifying the moral perfection that he endeavours to inculcate through his writing. Finally, Jonson declares that it is his aim to "raise the despised head of poetrie againe, and stripping her out of those rotten and base rags wherewith the times have adulterated her form, restore her to her primitive habit, feature and majesty, and render her worthy to be imbraced and kist of all the great and master-spirits of our world."<sup>9</sup>

In the Prologue to the revised version of *Every Man in his*

*Humour* we find Jonson contemptuously dismissing contemporary drama as escapist and wildly improbable, somewhat arrogantly offering his play as "One such, to day, as other playes should be"<sup>10</sup> — in short, as the model comedy. This prologue is of central importance for understanding Jonson's theory of comedy. It stands as a comic manifesto— an explicit declaration of his aims in writing comedy. He begins with an attack on "th'ill customes of the age"<sup>11</sup> — on the drama of his day, which indulges in the crudest romantic excesses, which has lost touch with life, which indeed is gratuitous art, serving no moral purpose. Instead of such folly, he will present his audience with the ideal comedy— a comedy which deals with "deedes, and language, such as men doe use, / And persons, such as Comoedie would chuse / When she would shew an Image of the times"<sup>12</sup>. Realism is therefore an important feature of this new comedy which moves away from romantic fantasies to the concerns of everyday reality. Partly in justification of this claim to realism, Jonson changes the setting from Italy to Jacobean London— the London which forms the background to most of his mature comedies. Sidney had pointed out that "we delight in things that have a conveniency to ourselves or to the general nature", but it is Jonson who is really the first to emphasise realism as an important element of comedy. But comedy is not merely the image of the times— it is also the function of the comic poet to "sport with humane follies, not with crimes"<sup>13</sup>. One can argue that the distinction between folly and crime is somewhat tenuous— how are we to describe the failings exposed in *Volpone*? But the moral purpose of writing comedy is firmly established. Comedy to Jonson is a serious art form— its ultimate purpose is didactic. As he says in *Discoveries*, comedy, like tragedy, must delight and teach. The immediate source for this conception of comedy seems to be Sidney's definition— "Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which he presenteth in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be ; so as it is impossible that any beholder may be content to be such a one". But what is remarkable is Jonson's relegation of laughter in comedy to a purely secondary role (he certainly diverges from his theory in practice)— "Nor, is the moving of laughter alwaies the end of Comedy, that is rather for the peoples delight, or their fooling. For, as Aristotle saies rightly, the moving of laughter is a fault in Comedie, a kind of turpitude..."<sup>14</sup>. Jonson therefore comes out

very strongly in favour of a didactic comedy. To him the comic poet is a kind of social monitor, entrusted with the task of disciplining erring human nature.

Thus in the Prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* Jonson places himself clearly in a realistic-satiric tradition of comedy. Although he adopts a Plautine plot-structure in *Every Man in his Humour* as C. G. Thayer points out<sup>15</sup>, his didactic theory brings him closer to the Old Comedy of Aristophanes rather than the Comedy of Menander or Plautus and Terence. For, although in *Discoveries* Jonson criticises Aristophanes for his scurrilous personal attacks, it is to Aristophanes that we must turn to find a vigorous attack on contemporary men and manners--- a use of comedy as a vehicle for social criticism. Any social criticism in New Comedy is merely incidental.

The induction of *Every Man out of his Humour* carries further this exposition of Jonson's comic theory. Indeed, the three Comickall Satyres are of especial importance for an understanding of Jonson's Comedy. Here we see Jonson consciously trying to put his critical theory to practice. The very name Comickall Satyre is significant, showing the deliberate linking up of two genres— Comedy and Satire. The lengthy induction of *Every Man out of his Humour* is devoted mainly to exposition and self-defence. The device of the play within a play allows Jonson to weave critical discussions of the play into the play itself. The two spectators Mitis and Cordatus offer a sustained choric commentary, and through them Jonson has an excellent opportunity for voicing his own opinions and justifying his dramatic technique. He explicitly links his comedy with *Vetus Comoedia*. Mitis demands if the dramatist has observed "all the lawes of Comedie"<sup>16</sup>—such as the division into acts and scenes, the use of the chorus, the observance of the Unities. This allows Jonson, through Cordatus, to vigorously defend any departure from established tradition— for, after all, the entire evolution of comedy is nothing but a series of innovations in dramatic method, and "I see not then, but we should enjoy the same licence or free power to illustrate and heighten our invention as they did ; and not bee tyed to those strict and regular formes, which the nicenesse of a few...would thrust upon us".<sup>17</sup> Later on, Mitis complains about the absence of any romantic intrigue— whereupon Cordatus retorts with Cicero's definition of

comedy... "a thing throughout pleasant and ridiculous and accommodated to the correction of manners"<sup>18</sup>. The induction also includes a detailed exposition of the theory of humours, which is too often given undue emphasis and in fact has little relevance to Jonson's didactic theory of comedy. Jonson merely uses this theory to justify a certain technique of characterisation. To consider his comedies solely as humour comedies is to ignore their real satiric significance.

But most important, *Every Man Out of his Humour*, like the two other Comickall Satyres, shows Jonson attempting to project the figure of the poet-teacher into the play. In Asper he gives us the first of his portraits of the ideal satirist. He is like the good man of *Discoveries*—one of "the Stars and Planets of the Ages wherein they live, and illustrate the times", one who "plac'd high on the top of all vertue, look'd downe on the stage of the world, and contemned the Play of Fortune. For though the most be Players, some must be Spectators"<sup>19</sup>. George Parfitt has pointed out the significance of the passage<sup>20</sup>. The good man must have an inviolability, as well as a certain détachment, well summed up in the image of the star. But he has also a responsible role in society. He must "illustrate" the times—a word suggesting at once that he must be a model and inspiration to men of his age but also that he must illuminate both what is good and what is bad to others. This is Jonson's conception of the role of the artist—and in his plays we see him attempting to define the good man, to present him in art, and use him as an agent to pin down vice and folly. Asper is such a figure—a man whose moral integrity authorises him to adopt the stance of the detached observer, the chastiser of human nature. He is a man "of an ingenious and free spirit, eager and constant in reproofe, without feare controuling the worlds abuse"<sup>21</sup>. Through Asper Jonson utters with passionate eloquence the lofty and driving scorn which is the animating spirit of his satire. Asper announces that it is his noble aim to "strip the ragged follies of the time / Naked, as at their truth"<sup>22</sup>. The play will be a "mirrour" where the audience will "see the times deformitie/Anatomized in every nerve, and sinnew".<sup>23</sup> The tone has become more mordant than that of *Every Man In his Humour* with its emphasis on the more genial "humane follies". The induction however is not without dramatic interplay, as the more moderate Mitis and Cordatus attempt to temper Asper's corrective zeal. It is clear that Asper's vision has Jonson's approval—but in the actual play it

is given no clear focus, so that the savage indignation becomes dramatically incongruous. It is worth noting that in the play itself Asper is metamorphosed into the malcontent Macilente—a widely-travelled scholar, but one in whom social malaise has resulted in “an envious apoplexie...that he growes violently impatient of any opposite happiness in another”<sup>24</sup>, an intemperate railer whose anger against the world that has disappointed him is so intense that he would like to destroy it altogether. Macilente’s indignation is altogether excessive in the dramatic context—he sees follies as vices, amusing comic characters as “monstrous prodigies”. At times he seems to be motivated by nothing more than sheer spite—as in the poisoning of Puntavarlo’s dog. If Jonson has projected the satirist figure in *Every Man Out of his Humour*, one can argue that the portrayal is not wholly uncritical. As Parfitt remarks<sup>25</sup>, *Every Man Out of his Humour* considers the formal satirist as a possible agent for the kind of moral analysis Jonson wishes to make—and finds the figure wanting.

Crites in *Cynthia’s Revels* is subjected to no such critical scrutiny. Like Asper, he is an analyst-cum-satirist figure. But whereas Asper is controlled to some extent by Cordatus, Crites is presented in extravagantly—almost embarrassingly—adulatory terms. He is of course morally immaculate, “a creature of a most perfect and divine temper, one in whom the humours and elements are peaceably met, without emulation of precedencie—in all so composit and order’d, as it is cleare, Nature went about some ful worke, she did more than make a man, when she made him”<sup>26</sup>. But this goodness remains abstract—merely stated rather than demonstrated through dramatic interaction with the other characters. Mercury enlists Crites in his services—asking him to help him in chastising the wayward courtiers—“And by that worthy scorne, to make them know/How farre beneath the dignity of man /Their serious, and most practised actions are”<sup>27</sup>.

Once again we note an imbalance between this righteous indignation and the kind of lighthearted folly that is the actual target of attack. As a character Crites remains an abstraction. Jonson cannot envisage a dramatic situation which will give the satirist a convincing role. The rigidity of *Cynthia’s Revels* betrays a dramatic conception which remains on the theoretic, abstract level, without

being tested in the context of a real, complex situation. It gives the play a static, formal, masque-like quality.

The last of the Comicall Satyres, *The Poetaster*, offers the most sustained exploration of such critical issues. The tendency is to interpret it almost exclusively in the light of the Poet's War in which Jonson played an active part. There is no doubt that personal rancour played a part in the composition of the play—one can justifiably identify particular characters with certain dramatists of the time. But one must also recognise that the play goes beyond such a narrow context. *The Poetaster* is a play which is concerned with art—with a defence of literary standards, with defining the role of the artist in the community. After all, apart from Demetrius and Crispinus we have other artist figures, both true and false, serious and irresponsible—Virgil, Ovid, and of course Horace—the satirist figure, conventionally regarded as a flattering self-portrait. In Horace we find the most elaborate portrait of the ideal satirist. He is basically the voice of reason—the man who is able to stand above the petty intrigues which absorb lesser men like Demetrius and Crispinus, who “pursues” “with a constant firmnesse” a “meane”<sup>28</sup> according to which he judges the follies of society. A contrast is drawn between Horace and Ovid Junior. As in the case of Lorenzo Junior, Ovid's devotion to poetry in the face of the disapproval of his stern father attracts our sympathy—he is given an impassioned defence of poetry, and his final banishment strikes us as too harsh. But to Jonson Ovid is to be criticised. Unlike Horace, who preserves the lofty detachment of the good man of *Discoveries*, Ovid allows himself to be drawn into a foolish masquerade. He is guilty of a misuse of talent—his is a case of moral irresponsibility. The true poet must be morally above reproach.

Jonson brings down all his scorn on the two poetasters. Beyond the personal rancour, they become types of the false poet—those who endanger the body politic by

“the sinister application  
Of the malicious, ignorant and base  
Interpreter”<sup>29</sup>.

Hence the severity of their punishment is justified. The climax comes in the well-known scene where Crispinus is given emetic and forced to vomit out his inkhorn terms and afterwards recommended a diet of standard authors for his recuperation. The

emetic is administered with great righteousness by Horace, backed by the authority of Augustus and Virgil. The scene, indeed, is offensive—once again one feels that the intensity of the loathing threatens to disrupt the comic mood.

The presence of Virgil at the climactic moment is worth noting. He is the ideal poet as Jonson imagines him in *Discoveries*—the embodiment of all that is morally sublime and artistically perfect. He is a worthy ornament of the court of Augustus—the ideal ruler who recognises the true worth of “sweet poesie”—“which is of all the faculties on earth / The most abstract and perfect”<sup>30</sup>. Augustus bows to the superior authority of Virgil, whose writings can offer a moral guide “distill’d / Through all the needful uses of our lives”.<sup>31</sup> Virgil recognises the need for self-examination and self-discipline. Not only is he ‘refin’d/From all the tartarous moodes of common men...’ but also “most severe / In fashion and collection of himself”.<sup>32</sup> A man of immense scholarship, his learning is not a matter of merely re-echoing erudite terms. In short, Virgil unites in himself the virtues of Nature, Exercise, Study and Art—those qualities which for Jonson go to the making of the perfect artist, who of course is also the type of the good man.

Through Virgil Jonson gives a vigorous defence of satire. Whereas the poetaster indulges in personal invective, the satirist is inspired by a sincere reforming zeal. If his criticism seems severe, that only adds to his credit—it is the mark of a “suffering vertue / Oppressed with the licence of the times”<sup>33</sup>. And in the epilogue Horace asserts his undying devotion to his artistic principles—“I will write Satires still, in spite of fear”.

*The Poetaster* represents Jonson’s most sustained attempt to embody his artistic ideals in dramatic form. Yet dramatically the play is a failure. Once again the ideal poet fails to become dramatically alive. At the climactic moment the adulation freezes the action. Jonson still finds it difficult to give an effective role to his ideal artist figure.

Significantly, after the Comickall Satyres the satirist / analyst figure disappears from Jonsonian comedy. As Jonson attempts to measure his abstract artistic ideals against the aggressive, incorrigible, bustling reality around him, he comes up against formidable difficulties. The contrary tendencies in *The Poetaster*—on the one hand, an over-righteous indignation and on the other, a wholly uncritical admira-

tion—cannot be brought together in a well-knit dramatic framework. Rather, they tend to pull the work askew and result in a loss of dramatic coherence. And as Jonson turns his attention more and more towards the complex disordered reality of his time he finds it increasingly difficult to embody his artistic ideals in any meaningful dramatic action. For he realises that quotidian reality resists correction—that the satirist cannot effect a miraculous conversion of human nature. The *Comicall Satyres* had shown him too optimistic about the power of satire to discipline manners and morals. He seemed to think that if one could hold up a mirror to human nature and effectively demonstrate the folly of vice and the nobility of virtue, men would automatically reform their ways. But this belief that art can be used for moral instruction collides with his honesty in the face of experience. In the anarchic gaiety of *Bartholomew Fair* art must be reduced to Nightingale's song— which is used as a cover for pocket-picking— or to the puppet play, which is used to “confound” *Busy*, but which is also a disturbing image of vulgarity and littleness — a perversion of the loftiest ideals. The present age can only accommodate the lofty ideals of love and friendship by reducing them to the level of an obscene tavern brawl. It is fitting that a play which recognises the futility of all attempts to amend should also acknowledge that art can never effect any facile transformation of the vicious and foolish.

Contrary to established opinion, we never find in Jonson's comedies a mechanical application of his abstract theories of satire. Rather, we see his uncompromising honesty in attempting to place his theories in the context of actual experience, and the very hesitations and artistic problems of his *Comicall Satyres* are indications of the inevitable gap that must exist between theory and practice. As we move to the mature comedies, we find an increasing awareness of the difficulty of maintaining the balanced, detached, analytic position of the satirist. We sense the problems of the didactic artist attempting to maintain his corrective stance in the face of an overwhelming, intractable reality.

The conventional image of Jonson as the exemplar of a rigid “classical” theory of comedy needs to be qualified. After all, Jonson never advocates a slavish adherence to the rules of the ancients. Admittedly, he draws freely from earlier authorities. In



the concluding notes on plot and fable in *Discoveries*, for example, he more or less reproduces the ideas of Aristotle. "For hee that was onely taught by himselfe, had a foole to his master".<sup>84</sup> But he is also firm in stipulating that servile imitation is not enough. We have seen how in the Induction to *Every Man Out of his Humour* he justifies divergence from earlier comic practice. His claim is not that he is reviving classical comedy, but that he is taking the ancient rules as guides for evolving a new, purer form of comedy. So also in *Sejanus—To the Readers* he admits that he is breaking away from classical canons—that, judged by rigid classical standards his play would be found wanting, for it lacks the unity of time, nor does it have a proper chorus. But once again he justifies such irregularity. "Nor is it needful, or almost possible in these our times, and to such auditors as commonly things are presented, to observe the old state and splendour of dramatic poems, with preservation of any popular delight." He thus recognises that the nature of contemporary audiences must be taken into account—any over-faithful observation of classical rules becomes mere pedantry. Jonson strove to return to the ordered harmony and discipline of the ancients—but he always warned against the folly of clinging on to outworn precepts.

In drawing on the authority of the ancients Jonson is after all true to his age. The creative exuberance of the English Renaissance was not incompatible with a steady interest in classical models. But it was far from a servile prostration before classical authority. Jonson's respect for the ancients is coupled with a sturdy belief in the possibilities of the native genius. "To all the observations of the Ancients we have our owne experience.... Truth lyes open to all ; it is no mans severall."<sup>85</sup> Without the aid of Nature, Art can do nothing. All learning is in vain "without a naturall art and a Poeticall nature in chief".<sup>86</sup> What we find in Jonson is the fusion of contrary tendencies. Just as in his plays we find a potentially anarchic comic imagination and an ingrained earthy realism united with the classicist's discipline and shaping intelligence, so also in his criticism we find a genuine admiration for the permanent and fundamental artistic principles of the ancients co-existing with an unwavering faith in originality and in the creative potentialities of the native literary genius.

## NOTES

All references to Jonson's Works are from the collected edition edited by C. H. Herford and P. and S. Simpson—II vols. (Oxford, 1925)—henceforth referred to as H/S.

1. *Every Man Out of his Humour*—H/S. Vol. III—Induction l. 178-180.
  2. *Discoveries*—H/S Vol. VIII—P. 642.
  3. Introduction—Selected Works of Ben Jonson—ed. by Harry Levin, Random House, Inc. 1938—P. 5.
  4. *Discoveries*—op. cit.—P. 581-2.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 595.
  6. *Every Man in his Humour*—Quarto of 1601—H/S Vol. III ACT V Sc 3, l. 316-7 ; 332-3 ; 335-343.
  7. *Volpone*—H/S Vol. V—Dedicatory Epistle—l. 36-38.
  8. *Ibid.*, l. 107-109.
  9. *Ibid.*, l. 129-134.
  10. *Every Man In his Humour*—Folio of 1616. H/S Vol. III—Prologue— l. 14.
  11. *Ibid.*, l. 4.
  12. *Ibid.*, l. 21-23.
  13. *Ibid.*, l. 24.
  14. *Discoveries*-- op. cit., p. 643.
  15. *Ben Jonson—Studies in the Plays*—C. G. Thayer—University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.
  16. *Every Man Out of his Humour*— op. cit., Induction. l. 235.
  17. *Ibid.*, Induction—l. 266-270.
  18. *Ibid.*, Act III Sc. 6. l. 207-209.
  19. *Discoveries*— op. cit., p. 597.
  20. *Ben Jonson : Public Poet and Private Man*, George Parfitt—J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1976, p. 25.
  21. *Every Man Out of his Humour*, op. cit., Prologue.
  22. *Ibid.*, Induction. l. 17-18.
  23. *Ibid.*, Induction, l. 118-121.
  24. *Ibid.*, Prologue.
  25. Parfitt, op. cit. p. 48.
  26. *Cynthia's Revels*—H/S Vol. IV—Act II Sc. 3, l. 123-125 ; 128-130.
  27. *Ibid.*, Act V Sc. 1, l. 20-23.
  28. *The Poetaster*—H/S Vol. IV—Prologue—l. 22-3.
  29. *Ibid.*, Act V Sc. 3, l. 140-3.
  30. *Ibid.*, Act V Sc. 1, l. 18-19.
  31. *Ibid.*, Act V Sc. 1, l. 119-20.
  32. *Ibid.*, Act V Sc. 1, l. 102-106.
  33. *Ibid.*, Act V Sc. 3, l. 367-70.
  34. *Discoveries*— op. cit., p. 563.
  35. *Ibid.*, p. 567.
  36. *Ibid.*, p. 640.
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